
ROOM NO. 879

A. N. HOLLABAUGH





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BY
ANDREW
NEWTON
HOLLABAUGH



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To
MY WIFE AND BOYS

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CHAPTER I

THE PLACE

TOO FAR away and still too near, located outside the city limits, beyond the reach of its noise and bustle, away from the busy inhabitants and the idle inhabitants that jam and pack and cram its dusty streets—the site not a fit one, but it is of no difference. In all the world a more suitable place could not be found. Beyond it the mountains, with an aspect in keeping with their associations, growing out of their near-by position, and from which, knowing them, we prefer to look away in some other direction or to walk away and never look upon them or think of them again: and the broad river which, unfortunately, flows too near, rolling its muddy water, its clear water, its filthy water, its clean water, its cold water, its warm water, its pure water, its impure water, its any kind of water, its every kind of water, between its high banks, its low banks, its bare banks, its covered banks, its any kind of banks, its every kind of banks, on and on and on to its appointed end.

There it stands and there it must stand. To pull it down, to take it away, to destroy it, to bury it in the earth, to sink it in the deepest depths of the ocean, to blow it into atoms, to grind it to dust would serve little. It has been a necessity; it is now a necessity, and in the future it must continue to be a necessity. We do not want it at any price; we do want it regardless of cost. It is very dear to us; we hate it bitterly. To it we turn with hope; from it we go in despair. We think of it all the time; we strive not to think of it at any time. It has its redeemable features; it has its features that are beyond redemption's tolerance. It is the abode of a strange form of peace; it is the abode of a war far, far more strange. It is the home of a potential calm; it is the home of a terrible riot.

It is the haven of quietude; it is the haven of disquietude. It is a place of tranquility; it is a place of turbulence. It is a retreat of danger, hazard and peril; it is a retreat of safety, security, and restraint. It is the seclusion of destiny and fate; it is the shelter of decree and doom. It is the beginning; it is not the beginning. It is the end; it is not the end. Into its restless vortex has been poured all there is in temporal hope and expectancy. Within its confines honor loses its identity and in similitude vies with dishonor until the two become lost in the one and the one lost in itself. Within its confines probity having no means of self-recognition, the integrity of which it is composed, ceases to retain its integral parts. Within its confines even the inordinancy of self-esteem throws off its garments to complete nakedness; for now, false or true, there is no difference. Within its confines the only alliance of right and wrong, but the one unknown to the other, the other unknown to the one, and both the one and the other unknown to themselves. Within its confines we are lost, lost, lost!

There it stands, and there it must stand. By it trees are actually growing, buds and twigs and boughs swaying back and forth in the breeze; green foliage, when the season is right and the warmth has driven the frost from the air; birds and the songs that birds sing; on the ground, grass, ordinary grass of root and blade, just as if it had grown many, many miles away, green and fresh and full of life; flowers too, rich in colors and richer in perfume, with the boldness to bloom and to give to the atmosphere their fragrance, not alone the coarse, thorny, fearless kind, but the tender, delicate, and fragile. Winding gravel walks lead in many directions, some even crossing and recrossing, but all having the same termination; broad driveways, slightly dropped beneath the surface level and fringed on both sides with the grass and trees and flowers. In groups or singly the smaller buildings stand apart, each one fashioned and proportioned to serve its allotted part. Near

the center the main structure, its massive walls made of brick, dull red, not of a different cast or size, but similar to the brick in general use everywhere, one piled above another, with solid mortar intervening, until the top of four stories is reached. Deep-set windows constructed of strong wood and thick glass, partly hid from view by heavy iron gratings that stand guard to all of them. Plain, strong doors equipped with cunning mechanical devices in which security and concealment are at their best. There it stands, and there it must stand. To pull it down, to take it away, to destroy it, to bury it in the earth, to sink it in the deepest depths of the ocean, to blow it into atoms, to grind it to dust would serve little.

In its solid, durable architecture the cast of thought that occupied the mind of the builder is plainly seen. With the placing of every brick must have come some thought as to what that brick would help to shut in. In external appearance many features common to the masonry of the period; in outward show many markings peculiar to the purposes for which it was designed. Inanimate brick and mortar, wanting in the power to feel, to think, to know, or else existing in a form for which we are without comprehensive means, either or neither of which can in any way shape or modify the memories and associations emanating from their unbroken silence. Invested with no innate faculties to which we can ascribe the interchange or communication of intelligence, in so far as the wisdom of man has presumed to know, yet they speak a language not possible to vocal organs, but of a significance stunning to our sensibilities and sickening to our perceptive forces. It is the language of confusion, the tongue of disorder, the dialect of perversion. To hear it is to remember it always. Not to hear it is to never know its terrible meaning. Shall we approach it? No, no, no! Run away in fear, quick, quick, quick! Away, away, away! It is a mad house. It is the jail of the demented. It is the prison of the insane. Pull it down, take it away, destroy it,

bury it in the earth, sink it in the deepest depths of the ocean, blow it into atoms, grind it to dust—but NO! To us it has come as the result of our social life; in it we reap some of the harvest of our boasted civilization; religion has had a hand in its construction; to it sin has contributed in lavish abundance. There it stands, and there it must stand. It is not grown. It is ever growing. To it they are coming all the time. From it they seldom go. The old are there, the young are there—father, mother, brother, sister, son, daughter—“such a commingling of the sons and daughters of men!” It is terror. It is dread. It is fear. It is fright. It is doom. It is horror. It is hell, a material and physical hell. To see, perchance, when there is naught that is visible; to hear when not a ripple of ether breaks on the ear; to feel when sensation is dead; to know without the aid of knowledge; illusion the law; delusion the edict; hallucination the established principle, with no choice of appeal to a higher tribunal; disorder becoming order, in that it does not change. It is a mad house. Run away quick, quick, quick! Away, away, away! Perverted love, perverted hate, perverted memories, perverted associations, a perverted past, a future void of hope; no ties of friendship; no home scenes of tender and confiding childhood, but a dim and faded glimpse of mother, ever tender and responsive, of father to protect and counsel, of the sacred joys of the hearthstone, of the youthful comrades of play, “of the little room so warm and bright, wherein to read, wherein to write.” Only a glimpse, faded and dim, then gone with the speed of the maddening thought that called their phantoms from memory’s shattered and broken stores. It is a mad house. Run away quick, quick, quick! Away, away, away!

CHAPTER II

A CLOSER VIEW

"THE very atmosphere hereabouts seems laden with madness," said Dr. Ruff, the Asylum's new Medical Superintendent, as, tired and hot with the duties of a busy and trying day, the big physician emerged from the asylum building to cool himself and divert his thoughts in a stroll about the extensive grounds. Before coming to the institution as its medical head and chief authority, Dr. Ruff had not been altogether unmindful of the many and unpleasant difficulties that must beset him in his new position. Extensive studies, persisted in for years, and variegated to include the subject in all its phases, had prepared him in a measure for some of the trials incident to the situation he now occupied. In theoretical anticipation he had satisfactorily covered the field, but, in fact, the three months he had spent there had been three months of a growing dissatisfaction with the work and the results his best efforts could bring forth.

"It must come any way, to a great extent," he reflected, "as the fruits of injudicious management, the want of proper foresight on the part of those in control, the lack of system, the disregard of order, the neglect of duty, and duty not only of those in authority, but of the many helpers and assistants."

Thus meditating, the physician reached the western inclosure of the Asylum grounds, where he threw himself upon a rough wooden bench standing against and for the most part supported by the trunk of a large tree. "Here for a time I may escape the din of that bedlam, free myself of the ravings, ease my ears of their irrational and delirious utterances," thought the physician. But the thoughts were scarcely complete in his mind when a mad screech penetrating the heavy air of the October evening

broke upon the quietude of his retreat and seemed to repeat its burden of madness in the thick boughs of the very tree beneath which he sat.

"Even at this distance their outbursts reach me," he said, turning himself in his crude seat, in such a position as to face the huge building, which in the deepening darkness seemed even of increased proportions and which as he now viewed it appealed to him in a way to touch his cold and impassive nature. "Of all the ills to which mankind is heir, unquestionably the worst," he mused, contemplating the vastness of the structure, with its thousands of incarcerated victims, and listening to their inarticulate and disjointed screams as in successive waves they issued from every part of the strong prison to repeat themselves in a few doleful echoes and die out forever on the chilly air of the coming October night. Indeed, how impassive the nature not to feel the cruelty of such a fate, how cold the man untouched by such a scene!

"It is disease," the big physician reflected, when presently the waves of madness receded, "disease of the physical man, disease of the physical brain, the mind diverted into abnormal channels, nature—"

His reflections were here interrupted by a noise as if some one was approaching from his rear. He listened a moment—unmistakably the sound of footfalls, and guarded. They came nearer, stopped. A secluded part of the grounds, the most distant from the building and at that time of the evening not likely a guard, or some one of the many helpers and assistants, who could have either interest or business at that time and place. The physician's curiosity was aroused. He peered in the direction from which the noise had proceeded, but in the thick darkness could discern no object. Perhaps an escaped inmate—such an accident sometimes happened. A conclusion the most plausible, but hardly arrived at when a low whistle, repeated one time in a sort of half tone, though distinct enough to be easily audible, issued from the

darkness apparently only a few paces from where the physician sat. "Rather unusual," thought the physician, rising to his feet. "He must know that I am here; I shall try to ascertain his wants." Then, bethinking of the craftiness of some of the inmates, which often attained a degree not possible to the normal man, a cunning to deceive those long occupied in their care and attention, the physician stifled the impulse while yet under cover of the tree, the thick overspreading branches of which, together with the darkness, wanted little in the requirements of a place of comparative concealment. If an escaped inmate, of which now in his mind there was little doubt, the inmate must be returned to safe-keeping. How could he best do it? Single-handed he knew that the task might prove to be a very difficult one, even more, if a young and strong inmate; that failure might attend the effort.

Again the whistle, with its half tone repeated, and this time in the opposite direction. "He has passed me unnoticed," thought the physician; "any further concealment on my part cannot improve the chances for his recapture. I shall make my presence known to him." Acting upon this conclusion, Dr. Ruff answered as best he could the whistle, exercising the utmost care that the half tone of the original lose as little as possible in the repetition. Immediately footsteps were heard, and to the Doctor's surprise—he had expected the contrary—they were rapidly approaching the tree. "Is it not enough," said an angry voice, "that I come to this hellish place? Of the two, a graveyard would be my preference. Here are the infernal keys, made by the model, number for number. If they serve, or if they do not serve, be it now understood I come not to this accursed place again." With which, a bunch of keys was tossed to within a few feet of where the physician stood, and the intruder, as betokened by his footsteps, hastily disappeared through

the darkness in the same direction from which his presence had at first been made known.

"Ha! an incident calculated to clear some of the happenings hereabout," said the big physician, regaining almost instantly his usual self-possession, the temporary loss of which had come at a turn of events so completely unexpected as for the moment to take him utterly unawares. "The reports then," said Dr. Ruff, picking up the bunch of keys, "have for their basis something more substantial than the superstitious fears of some of the orderlies and attendants. Keys designed no doubt for material locks, but may be used, and perhaps with equal facility, to unlock some of the reputed mysteries of this place." So mused the big physician, as with quickened steps he made his way back to the building, where, upon entering his office, Mr. Hickerson, the assistant superintendent, was immediately summoned to his presence.

Heretofore discrediting the reports of unaccountable occurrences on the grounds that they had no other foundation than the ignorant and superstitious fears entertained by the helpers and assistants, fears, as Dr. Ruff believed, of a nature to readily transform the slightest appertaining fact into a species of supernaturalism invested with all the powers of the miraculous, in view of the interesting incident of the evening the big physician was frank to admit to himself that in this he had grossly misjudged the assistants. That material locks, even those of a construction the most secure, must yield to material keys no one can doubt, reflected the physician, as in growing impatience he awaited the arrival of Mr. Hickerson. Silently indignant at the state of affairs as he had found them upon taking charge of the institution, affairs meriting, according to his estimation, the most severe criticism, with the discovery of this tangible evidence of some unbecoming purpose, the feelings of the big physician burst forth in the most outspoken censure. "The whole institution from cellar to garret a disgraceful, a flagrant shame," he said, indi-

cating in a smart blow upon the desk the tension of the indignation released. "Rather an ill-kept jail for the imprisonment of the unfortunate inmates than a humane, scientific hospital for their proper care and treatment."

The physician's further censure was checked by the entrance of Mr. Hickerson.

"Of the reports of the unaccountable doings here current," said Dr. Ruff, coming at once to the purpose for which he had sent for the assistant.

"The very thing uppermost in my own mind," answered Mr. Hickerson, and, what is more singular, I sought you only now in the grounds with that purpose in view. We cannot—there is little doubt—"

"Well, go on," impatiently interposed the physician.

"The reports, I fear," continued Mr. Hickerson, "are not altogether unfounded. We cannot attribute them to the morbid fears of the attendants, though God knows some of them hold certain inmates in mortal dread. We cannot—"

"Leave the foolish attendants to their foolish fears, and tell me what direct proof, if any, you have to substantiate the reports," the physician a second time interrupted.

"Proof? proof?" rejoined Mr. Hickerson, hastened somewhat by the physician's outspoken impatience; "the proof that doors in certain sections cannot be kept locked. That inmates have been transferred from one room to another, some even having been turned loose in the building."

"There, enough!" the incensed physician exclaimed. "What by accident I learned this evening confirms your report, a mean low trick to add to the other disgraces of this place, but one to receive our immediate attention and the perpetrator once apprehended befitting punishment to quickly follow. Indeed, Mr. Hickerson, we need no further proof."

But further proof, and proof of a character far more in-

teresting, was at that very moment knocking at the door.

"A gentleman wants to see Dr. Ruff at once," the porter announced.

"Admit him," said the physician.

"I seek Dr. Ruff, the superintendent," said the stranger, looking first at the physician, then at Mr. Hickerson.

"On personal or institutional matters?" asked Dr. Ruff.

"That perhaps you yourself may best determine when my mission is known to you," answered the stranger. "I am Detective Eoff, of the Federal service, brought here, and very unexpectedly, by duties the nature of which I shall immediately explain. (Damn, what shrieks! Excuse me, gentlemen; I should be accustomed to anything, but I see I am not. Those plaintive screeches chill me through and through.) A certain inmate," continued the detective, consulting a memorandum, "a young man, Edgar Barton by name, presumably—mark you, I say presumably—brought here about four months ago. It is my mission, first to establish the fact beyond all doubt that the real Edgar Barton, and not some one else bearing his name, was brought to this place. Second, that he is here now. These things settled in a way to satisfy all possible inquiries, a minute description of the man, as well as the nature and severity of his mental disorder. I might not inappropriately place as the third desideratum in a systematic enumeration of the points in general; considerations in themselves of an importance to warrant our most careful attention; but of special importance, the presence of certain scars and markings on his person to readily lead to his identification under difficulties and surroundings the most adverse imaginable." Here again Mr. Eoff had recourse to his memorandum. "The presence, gentlemen, of a large scar, the results of a burn on his left chest immediately beneath the collar bone, and on the right foot a marking of smaller proportions, but of easy recognition, the remains of a smoothly incised wound of some years ago. He is alleged," continued the detective, referring to a

different memorandum, "to have embezzled the funds of a Federal bank, with which institution he held the responsible position of chief cashier, and in which place for some time his services unquestionably were of the highest value. (An irrelevancy, however, in this connection. Those shrieks are unbecoming my temper.) The young man was brought to a speedy trial, convicted of the robbery, committed to a Federal prison, later adjudged insane, and sent supposedly—note you again I say supposedly—to this place. Facts, gentlemen, not known, or even suspected at the time of his conviction," further explained the detective, "have come to the surface, in view of which it was deemed prudent by the Federal authorities to work the case all over again; not though, as I understand it, with the purpose or expectation of anything especially pertaining to the young man—if he is insane, fate in that one thing has placed him safely even beyond all Federal jurisdiction—but with the hope of locating the money and, better still, of recovering the considerable sum in question. A valid reason, you see, gentlemen, and one to amply justify the time and effort, but not the only reason. Circumstances and incidents have so conspired as to justify the hope of incriminating another."

"In which information we find the motive for the otherwise unexplainable disturbances here," remarked Mr. Hickerson, ridding himself of a suggestion he deemed not imprudent and at the same time mitigating the oppressive suspension incident to the detective's lengthy reference to his memoranda.

"And the information that this place is being used as the cover for some hellish plot," exclaimed the incensed physician.

"Recently," pursued the detective, "in attempting to correlate the facts set forth in the embezzlement there were found a number of circumstances insignificant in themselves, but, if properly followed up, not altogether un-

promising of valuable results. In short, gentlemen, I have reason to believe that the money is still intact; that in all likelihood Mr. Barton had an accomplice, one who was aware of his mental condition, took advantage of it, used him in such a way as to attach all suspicions to him; simply made of him and his mental condition an aid to further his own criminal aims. The case certainly is not the open one it was at first believed; neither is it one that can be regarded as the usual or ordinary. On the contrary, in it there is seen the deftness of a sane, keen, and crafty mind, really a cunningness to challenge the best wit and skill of the detective art. The life of the young man, other than the embezzlement, loses nothing at the most careful scrutiny. His family, a father and mother. He an only child of the very best repute—a factor, however, of little merit and in itself to be considered only in a very general way. And I also might add,” emphasized the detective, once more consulting his memoranda, “a factor wholly foreign to the purpose that brought me here. On my way hither I took occasion to look into the Federal prison where for some weeks the young man was confined and where, which is an incident of the case not easily reconciled to many other incidents of known and suspected occurrence, the question of the prisoner’s lunacy, heretofore unsuspected—at no time did he make a plea to that effect—was determined, one of the features in the case which was influential in bringing about its reconsideration, and one which, by special request, I was to thoroughly investigate. While at the Federal prison, through the rarest caprice of accident, a bit of information of the kind to add zest to the game and to invest it with a tinge of the romantic came into my possession, the first evidence, gentlemen,” Mr. Eoff lowered his voice and spoke less hurriedly, “of the presence of a woman, and committed of such acts as to place herself not beyond the limits of a reasonable suspicion. One of those unusual happenings without which the work of the detective in time would lose

its fascination. A rare combination of incidents and events of no visible association and yet under certain interpretations having an intimate connection one with the other. The story, gentlemen, of the trail of a woman marked by the most cunning deception I have ever encountered." Another short pause, in which there was reference to the written data, this time consulting a different manual of entry. "In brief," resumed Mr. Eoff, "it would appear that the lady in question—young and beautiful to a degree not likely to pass unnoticed—is here now in the capacity of a professional nurse, or, if not here now, has but recently taken her departure."

"Such doings of this place I will purge immediately."

"Only a few moments more, Doctor, if you please, sir," interposed the detective. "In reference to the nurse it is highly prudent that the greatest care be exercised. At present only suspicions are lodged against her, and, I should add, suspicions largely of a conjectural nature. The proof to definitely connect her with the case must yet be uncovered, and that no doubt is best served by leaving her to her own acts. If guilty, it is but a question of time until some turn in her unmolested conduct will furnish the evidence to unquestionably establish the matter of her incrimination. Arouse not her suspicions. Show not that she is being observed. Leave her to act as she herself may determine. Let her play it to the end, that we may gather some evidence of a positive nature, something of which we may openly accuse her, but in the meantime use the utmost care that naught she does escapes your knowledge."

"The name under which she passes?" inquired Mr. Hickerson.

"The very thing," answered the detective, "that brought her within the pale of the suspect. And I might say, through an intricate series of acts and incidents so cleverly staged as for a while to completely lose me at the end of each scene. Really and truly a species of elusion in the quality of its artfulness certainly of a rare pro-

duction. Without name and without origin preceding her presence at the Federal prison—that is, in so far as my endeavors were able to ascertain. But here, if I mistake not, she passes under the name of Miss Osburn.”

“And is here now!” exclaimed Mr. Hickerson.

“Otherwise,” pursued the detective, “the past month’s work, the hardest I ever did in all my life, would have come to nothing. Yes; she is here now, one fact in a whole bundle of suppositions.”

“Yes; here now, for that matter, has been here three or four months.”

“A certainty of which we stand assured. Here now, but for what purpose? What brought her here? What does she hope to accomplish?”

“Whatever the purpose, it shall end in the hope and not in the accomplishment,” interrupted Dr. Ruff.

“Of that let us not be too sanguine,” rejoined Mr. Eoff. “Overconfidence, we must remember, is frequently a snare to entrap the possessor, its provoker thereby avoiding the noose. Moreover, the girl (such from the description she must be) has played her game, thus far, remarkably well, though in time no doubt she will make the unguarded move.”

“We will watch her every—”

“Only a few more moments; my own time is not without limits,” continued Mr. Eoff. “Yes, watch the girl, learn the purpose that brought her here. But back to Mr. Barton, the inmate. With the loss or disappearance of certain papers at the Federal prison, those carrying a physical description of the young man, the question of his identity must be reestablished, one of the awkward features in the affair unless this place can furnish the needed information.”

“A thing easily and readily accomplished,” said Dr. Ruff, having recourse to the Asylum records, the B file of which was at once placed upon the desk, and from which,

the desired record having been found, the physician began to read: "Record No. 879, Edgar Barton, age—"

"Of little value," the detective interrupted, his trained eye observing at a glance the evidence of erasures. "The record has been changed and in the change the very name, as you see, rendered uncertain. B - a—or o—r - t - a—or o—and u—or n. Barton or Bortau. Date of entry and age in doubt, as is at once perceived by the ill-formed figures; many whole lines erased and rewritten, utterly useless in the attempted establishment of his identity. Perhaps, though, in that the changes appear to be entered in a feminine hand may render us aid in another capacity. For his identity we must resort to other means."

"To a physical examination of the inmate of Room No. 879," interposed the physician. "That becomes possible in the event that there can be no mistake in the record numbers and that there has been no exchange of inmates," continued the detective, which supposition, in view of the present findings, must obviously involve no small amount of uncertainty unless there is to be had positive evidence to the contrary."

"Such evidence we shall have," exclaimed the impetuous and irate physician.

"In which event," pursued the logical detective "the first step to the successful identification of the inmate will have been accomplished. A stage of progress to make more easy the future going, a fact, you see, from which to prosecute our efforts. In the meantime use the proper care that no move here escapes your notice, and that all new developments deemed worth while lose no time in their transmission to the Secret Service offices," with which, a few inconsequential details and instructions omitted, the detective took his leave.

Incensed as Dr. Ruff had been at the general conditions of the Asylum, with the incident of the misplaced keys and the story of the detective, proof positive that the institution was being made use of to cover or further the purpose

of some sinister plot, in the heightened indignation now felt by the physician, he could not wait until the next day, but began at once an examination of the asylum records, bringing to this task not only the services of Mr. Hickerson, but such of the other assistants and helpers as might be spared from their usual duties and to whom the necessary secrecy might be intrusted.

"We shall do it and without delay," affirmed the physician in his final instructions. "The identity of the particular inmate in question shall be established, the nature and purpose of the conspiracy ascertained, and those responsible for it brought to the proper accounting." How little at the time did the physician realize the extent of the task before him! How unmindful of the many difficulties and dangers marking its devious course from inception to completion!

CHAPTER III

A STILL CLOSER VIEW

WHILE Dr. Ruff and his assistants in the offices below were busy with the records, musty bundles of which were brought from their long-undisturbed files, some of them faded and worn with time, some of them the records of inmates dead and forgotten, all of them poorly kept and of meager information, in a small chamber on the second floor, removed some distance from the offices and occupying that section of the building devoted to the nurses, was one even more intently engaged than the most zealous of the doctor's crew. But it was not with the musty and ill-kept records of the asylum that the mind of the fair nurse was employed.

"Ten o'clock," she muttered, consulting the small watch at her wrist, "and no sign of him yet. Has he failed me in the last assortment of the keys? His promise was eight or thereabout, at most not later than nine, under the same tree and by the same token. I dare not hope further; no, no, and yet by some chance he may have been delayed. He was faithful before, kept his word. I will go one more time."

She stole from her room and by indirect ways, because offering greater safety, soon reached the grounds, dark now with the thick gloom of the heavy October night. "Thank God for its cover, but no time to lose," she murmured and plunging forward, halted her pace only when near the tree. She listened, waited, listened, stole nearer, listened, gave the signal. "No answer," she said half aloud, and turning made her way back to the building; but this time, emboldened perhaps by her disappointment, selected the most direct way to her room. "What? Lights in the offices," she murmured when she reached the main hallway, unusual at this hour. She drew nearer. "Examining

the records." In an instant its meaning flashed into her mind. Her face grew pale. Her heart seemed to leap into her throat at one bound. "They have found the changed record, or if not, will find it. It will lead to an investigation immediately." The thought fixed her to the spot. "O, if I had only left that part of it to chance," she said to herself. "If I had only—but done, it cannot be undone." This realization aroused her to action. She turned into a diverging hallway and a few moments later regained her room. "They have found it, or will find it. It will lead to an investigation. Am I to fail after all these days and weeks of dreadful sacrifice, of inhuman endurance? Is it to end with this, and am I to relinquish a hope as dear to me as life itself?" In these questions the beautiful face of the young woman was moved, almost distorted, by a wave of excruciating disappointment.

From day to day, from week to week, the part she had sustained had been made possible only through the constant self-assurance that she should succeed. For failure, in her plans by day, in her dreams by night, there had been no provision. She would set him free. Released of this awful, this dreadful place, his shattered mentality might be restored, the wrong she had done in a measure would be righted. Tears glistened in her eyes. She sank to the floor in the attitude of a few moments of prayer. "God favoring, I will attempt it to-night," she said, rising to her feet. "It may be my only chance; to-morrow may be too late. I will, I must do it to-night. O, if he only knew of my presence here, if he only knew of my purpose to set him free of this dreadful, this awful place. Will he know me? Will he know me? I will attempt it. I must do it to-night."

Composed somewhat by this decision reached, yet the mind of the young woman was tortured and torn by a thousand inquiries, by a thousand unforeseen, unthought-of difficulties and dangers. What if, being suspected, they should watch her? What if she should mistake his room?

What if, the attempt failing, it should debar all future effort? What if his mind, made worse by this dreadful place, in want of reason, the purpose annul? "Four months," she murmured, "four months in this terrible, this awful place. Will he know me? Will he know me? I *must* do it. I must do it *to-night*, and *to-morrow*—*to-morrow!*"

She drew from her bosom a small parcel, a paper neatly and compactly folded. It was a miniature plan of the interior of the huge building, carefully, correctly outlined, with rooms, halls, doors, angles, passages, and stairways systematically numbered or otherwise indicated. She unfolded it upon the near-by table to trace with her trembling fingers the way. Now forward, now to the right, now to the left, here a stairway winding in its ascent to gain the floor above. This a smaller passage leading to a section more securely arranged and more carefully guarded, at all hazards to be avoided. Anon, more hallways, both large and small, and turns and angles and corners, and passages and flights of stairs until, at the extreme end of the building, and on the topmost floor, her finger stopped at the doorway bearing the number 879. "In there," she whispered, and for the moment the anxious troubled look passed from her beautiful face, but for the moment only. She knew the way, the turns, the stairs, the halls, but the last assortment of keys she did not get. With those already in her possession she felt that she could gain his presence, was sure of this unless he had been recently transferred to another room; but of their final escape from the building, the want of the last assortment of keys necessitated certain exits, to gain which she realized that the chances of discovery were greatly increased. "Whatever the risk, I will, I must take it," she said, returning the papers to her bosom. It may be a mad attempt, but even at madness itself I shall not falter. Now, now, this instant." She glanced at her watch—midnight, the very hour for the deed. She passed into the hall. It was

deserted. "Thank God! fate is to favor me," she murmured. Thence to a flight of stairs, long, winding, but mounted with scarcely a touch of the feet; not pausing here in hesitancy of the way or vacillation of purpose, but on and on, now to the right and now to the left, then turns, and passages, and angles, and stairways, until, quaking and breathless, she stands at the door. The key correctly fashioned slips smoothly into the lock, but she waits a moment. To stay there, she cannot; to go in her courage must be strengthened. Would he know her, would she be able to make him understand her purpose, would he be as when she last saw him, conversed with him? What was the state of his mind? Hitherto she had often asked herself these questions, and in their contemplated answer the impairment of his mentality to a certain degree had been accepted. But now at his door, the next moment to step within his presence, how different their meaning, how many, how grave the new fears they bring to her mind! Would he know her? Would she be able to make him understand her purpose? What the condition of his reason—slightly impaired as when she last saw him, or madly insane? Four months, four long months and locked within this dreadful, this awful place. She must do it, or she must renounce it—enter his room or retrace her steps, act this moment or abandon it forever.

A wild, mad outburst from the bolted and barred chamber upon her right decided it for her. Trembling and faint, she opened the door and, entering noiselessly, relocked it from the inside. The darkness was intense; in its thickness she had the feeling that it was choking her, stifling her very breath. "Edgar, Edgar," she whispered, when the wildly demented neighbor ceased his mad raving. But there was no answer. She waited, she listened. The stillness deepened. Her heart throbbed wildly. The sense of suffocation became more urgent. Her head swam. Her bosom heaved. Her breath grew thicker, heavier. She clutched at her throat. "Edgar, Edgar, it is I, it is

I," she louder called. Again she waited, again she listened. But again out of the deep silence that filled the chamber there was no response. Enshrouded in this deathlike stillness she sought to regain her composure, to quiet her feelings. "Perhaps asleep," she tried to reason with herself; "but if asleep, I should hear his troubled breathing." She broke off abruptly. In the next thought was a new fear, its icy vapors chilling her physical being, its biting and penetrating frosts striking to the uttermost depths of her despairing soul. Could she have made a mistake? Is this the wrong room? Is he not here? Has he been transferred to another part of the building? She staggered a step in advance. "Edgar, Edgar, it is I, it is I," she once more tried to call, but her lips seemed motionless, her tongue swollen, her voice incapable of sound. "God in heaven," she prayed, falling upon her knees, "guide me in this moment of utter helplessness. Unto thy power I subm—" The prayer was silenced as if God himself had instantly crushed the suppliant.

The silent wall near the kneeling woman suddenly rang out in frantic blows—bang, bang, bang. Their heavy resonance filled her ears. "*There now, you demon,*" came a wild voice from the adjoining room, "*and there, and there,*" in increasing frenzy the blows and voice continued. "*It is only a part of what you deserve, you devil of demons. You are at me all the time. In my food with your stench and filth and slime, when I am hungry and must eat or starve; wriggling and writhing in the water I must drink, when my tongue is parched and my very vitals seem scorched; in my bed, under my bed, on my bed, all about my bed, when my eyes are heavy and I try to sleep.*" Bang, bang, bang, the blows resounded. "*Only a part of what you deserve, you arch devil of demons. O, you are here yet. I see you, I feel you, I hear you, I smell you, I can taste you.*" Bang, bang, bang. "*There now you have it, devil of demons, and there and there and there.*" Bang, bang, bang. "*Ha, ha, ha, ha, and there and there*

and there. Ha, ha, ha, ha. Gone, gone, gone, back into the darkness from whence it always comes." The frantic blows, the frenzied voice ceased abruptly.

"O God, guide me," continued the quaking woman. "Direct me in the course thou wouldst have me pursue. On thee—" Hist! She held her breath. Again the voice in the near-by room, but submissive now and mild: "The blood of it soils my fingers, its poisons vile infest my flesh, my hands ache and throb and bleed, my fingers stick one to another. I must lick them apart, for in the spittle it softens and dissolves and melts away. But seven suns must light the world without before these black stains fade from my flesh." The voice broke off or sank to a depth inaudible.

The prostrate woman struggled to her feet. She felt as if her senses were melting away into the thick darkness, as if her reason, all her mental faculties were deserting her, as if her very soul was ebbing out into the awful silence. Her head grew giddy. She reeled in the deepening gloom, her outstretched hands grasping, clutching at its undulating waves; weaker, fainter, trembling in every fiber; her physical strength was nearing its limit. Her senses, if unrelieved, must soon fail her. In this thought, in this realization, an added demand, likewise an added stimulus, and under its influence, she pressed yet forward, one short step in advance—some object in her path, a low-lying couch. At its touch the sensation of unspeakable, unthinkable fear, and yet she was drawn to it with a feeling of composure and relief.

She waited, she listened. "Edgar, Edgar, it is I, it is I," she softly called. The sleeper stirred, moved perhaps in a troubled dream, or it may be that the mad din of the near-by chamber had disturbed his restless slumbers; or if neither, could it not come within the possible that he had heard her call, that something in the words, the tone, the voice, the "Edgar, it is I, it is I," had broken in upon him with such an association as to lighten his sleep, and that the

real disturbance is to be found in the stooping figure that hovers close over him? He turns fitfully, the harsh squeaks from his rusty couch startle her anew. Fears, uncontrollable fears, flood her soul.

"Holy angels," she gasps, and limp and flaccid her senseless form topples lightly against the wall, but for an instant only. Nature is at her rescue. She reapproaches the sleeper, she bends above him, she calls again, "Edgar, Edgar, it is I, it is—" A motion from the couch checks her. She waits, she listens, she bends nearer the sleeper, she almost touches him with her outstretched hands. A night watchman passes in the hall without. She hears his footfalls. She is conscious that he tries the lock. "Safe," she hears him say. He passes on. Murmurs and lamentations start up in the next room, and in the next, and in the next. She hears them. She knows their meaning. They die down. She waits, she listens. Her fears are assuaged. She is now composed. She waits, she listens, she hovers closer, closer.

"It must have been a dream," she hears him say when all is quiet. "I thought at last she had come. I thought she was here this night. I thought she was here this minute. I thought she was standing by my side. I thought she was bending above my couch. A dream, a sweet dream." He paused. She listens, she waits, she hovers near. "I thought I heard her voice," he continued. "I thought I heard her call my name. Even now her tones are lingering in my ears. Blest visitation of Heaven, an angel in her form has stolen in upon my slumbers, has spoken to me in her words. I feel the presence now. Her spirit is with me still. It hovers about my awful couch. The very air of this chamber seems laden with it. I can scarce believe it is not here now."

He reached his hand out in the thick darkness, he swept it about him. It touched her garments. "Great God," he gasped, "what can this mean? An illusion? Is this, can this be an illusion? Is this, can this be a token

of my madness? Is this, can this be a fantasy—a vagary of the senses to haunt my dreams with delusions so sweet?" A stillness intervenes, a moment in which words fail him, a moment in which his thought is without the means of expression. She hovers close over him, she waits trembling. The motion of her violence is transmitted to her garments. It becomes noticeable to his sense of touch. He can distinctly feel it. "It moves," he murmured, "as if endowed with life. O, madness! madness! madness! wherefore thy delusive purpose, wherefore thy strangely creative powers? But no, no, no, it is not possible. It cannot be," he continued. "It has form. It has substance. It is something more than fancy, something more than the immaterial creations of the mind, either sane or insane, something more than the productions of the imagination, however wild and mad. It is, it must be something material. Or is it that my sense of touch deludes me?" He sought to put it to the test, to try it on some familiar object. He felt for the couch beneath him, examining it in its many parts as far as he could reach. "In this it befools, it deceives me not," he said. "In this my touch is true. I cannot doubt it, I cannot question it. True, true."

He reached out in the thick darkness in search of the familiar wall. His hand touched her hand. "Great God!" he exclaimed, "is there no end to its creative fantasies, no limit at which it must cease? A hand! a hand in the flesh; small, shapely, tender fingers—one, two, three, four, five. I feel its warmth. I feel its pulsations, the very throbs of its life's blood. A hand, a human hand. I feel its kindly pressure. I feel its friendly clasp. It tightens even now. Madness! No, no, of this madness cannot consist. It's a dream, a dream, a dream." He ceased speaking, his head dropped back to the pillow, smothered sobs issued from his couch. "Madness, madness, madness! No, no, no, of this madness cannot consist. It's a dream, a dream, a dream."

She waited, she listened, she drew nearer, she kneeled beside his couch. "Edgar, Edgar, it is I, it is I," she softly called. "Hark!" he exclaimed, "a voice, a voice from heaven. An angel's voice, and my name, and my own name it calls. Or is it a dream, or is it my madness?" "It is neither," she said, and she clasped her arms caressingly about his neck.

A wave of madness was sweeping the building, its lamentations and mutterings and grumblings and inarticulate sounds floating from hall to hall, from room to room, from chamber to chamber and out at last into the deep October night to die away in doleful echoes, too feeble to long keep up their tale of unspeakable woe.

Dr. Ruff, sorely indignant that the Asylum should be made the scene of some sinister plot, but of whatever purpose of nature confident that it would not be accomplished, was sleeping soundly in his comfortable and commodious bed beneath. Orderlies, assistants, night watchmen, nurses worked and lounged and dozed and gaped away the time. The usual nightly scenes common to the place, with perhaps some slight variations, were being enacted, but with the coming morning Edgar Barton was gone. By devious routes, by turns and passages and hallways and flights of stairs less likely to attract attention, she conducted him undetected from the building. At the inclosing wall they parted, he to go where, to do what? She to return to the building, to place another in his room, and to continue her duties as a professional nurse until such time as Edgar's escape was assured. Would that time ever come.

CHAPTER IV

THE PHYSICIAN AND THE GOOD MINISTER

NOTWITHSTANDING the unusual duties of the preceding day, duties that had occupied his time until late at night, an early hour the next morning found Dr. Ruff up and stirring. The incident of the misplaced keys which, by mere accident, had fallen into his own hands in itself would have aroused his suspicions and resulted in no small amount of investigation; but followed immediately as it was by the detective's visit and the discovery of the changed record, evidence so openly positive of some unbecoming purpose, Dr. Ruff felt that all other demands upon his time and attention should be given a secondary place until this one thing had been fully and thoroughly investigated and those responsible for it brought to the fullest accounting.

"A downright, a damnable plot, and brought within the very doors of the Asylum," said the angered physician, as the records for a more searching examination were brought from the files and placed upon the desk. "A scheme to use the afflictions of some unfortunate inmate as a shield to cover their own hellish deeds." Dr. Ruff had scarcely entered upon the task of re-examining the last file of papers placed upon the desk, this time with the special purpose of checking their numbers and sorting out those of the inmates dead or dismissed, when a knock at the door interrupted him. "Come in!" he impatiently, almost angrily, called.

The early morning visitor proved to be Rev. Clark, but at a knowledge of whom it could hardly be said that the impatience of the big physician was improved. The good minister frequently visited the Asylum and on more than one occasion had called upon the new Medical Superintendent, sometimes only for the day's greeting, at other

times engaging him in conversations more or less extended. But this morning Dr. Ruff was ill disposed to see any one, not even a most cherished friend. He had left instructions not to be disturbed. The task to which he had set himself he wished to finish without delay. To outward appearance this was a reasonable excuse for the stern physician's inhospitable feelings toward the good minister. But deeper rooted was the real cause. While in a general way tolerating the godly man—that much the physician's sense of civil courtesy, the position he occupied demanded—in reality the two men, though both highly educated in their respective lines, had no ideas in common, their thought, their feelings, their sentiments, the daily life of each, being as distantly removed one from the other as if the two men were inhabitants of different spheres. The physician, a stern, coldly calculating materialist, studying, dealing exclusively with the physical man—his material make-up, his powers, possibilities, limitations; treating with man as he is, and not with man as he is supposed to be; the good minister a spiritualist, the term in this sense used to express the opposite of the physical or material, and thinking only of man's spiritual nature, the immaterial part of his existence, and to what extent it may become, if properly directed, the controlling, the determining factor in the human life. In short, the physician dealing with established facts founded upon the fundamental laws of man's physical nature, the good minister content with fanciful suppositions wholly uninfluenced by such laws; the physician treating, thinking of man as he must be by virtue of the innate forces of his physical being; the good minister treating, thinking of man as he should become through the influences of a wise and discriminating choice.

"You are early to-day," said Dr. Ruff, after a rather formal salutation.

The good minister took a seat. In his devout face was a troubled, puzzled look, to the physician's trained ob-

servance an expression closely allied to, if not indicative of, physical pain. "Yes, yes, early to-day," answered the good minister. "I called to see my dear friend, the inmate of whom at a former visit we were speaking. He has grown much worse, has reached a stage where it seems he is wholly unable to set a limit on the illusory forces of his mind. Strange, strange, unaccountably strange," the good man repeated.

"Strange only to those not conversant with the laws that govern the human mind," said Dr. Ruff, not caring to-day to spare the feelings of the minister. At a former visit their conversation had taken similar lines, and the physician remembered some of the simple, childlike ideas the minister had expressed.

"To me, to my mind, strange, strange, unaccountably strange," continued the good minister, unnoticing apparently the physician's remarks. "My friend's condition, the state of his mind, the nature, the control of his thoughts, the origin, the character of the impulses that direct and drive them whither they will, to my comprehensive faculties at all times a mystery, but, I might say, this morning a mystery surpassing all former proportions, a mystery to defy all efforts at human solution. He knew me, and yet he did not know me. When I entered his room my presence at once seemed to attract and repel, to incite both pleasure and scorn. When I spoke to him he answered me in these strange words: 'You speak with the tongue of a minister, but your thoughts, your life, your deeds are of another order. Your hope, no doubt, was heaven; but, missing it, you, like me, have come to the other place, for this is hell.' He then stopped, gazed at me vacantly, beat upon his forehead with his finger tips as if to stir anew his thoughts. Then, continuing in the same tones, as if there had been no interruption: 'You do not speak with the tongue of a minister; but your thoughts, your life, your deeds are of that order. Mankind perhaps thought you were sure for hell; but, missing it, you, like

me have come to the other place, for this is heaven.' At first I thought his purpose was to repeat and in the attempt he had lost the connection; but in that I was in error, for over and over, again and again, always in the same order, with the vacant gaze, the strokes upon his forehead, he did not vary in the least, and, what is more strange, I could not stop him. He was repeating it when I left him. I fear he is repeating it now. Truly, Doctor, do you not hold that as strange?"

"Their thoughts often run in circles," answered the physician. "Especially is it true with certain types of insanity. Your presence was the stimulus that started him in that particular line of thought, and once the mental forces in action, they can be stopped or diverted only by a stronger influence than the one that set them going. He may repeat it a hundred times. He may repeat it a thousand times. He will, he must repeat it until a stronger stimulus checks him, or until exhaustion brings about his relief. He himself, through the forces of his own mental restraint, is without the power to stop it."

"Awful destiny," said the good minister, "but in it God has a purpose. Is it possible that he really believes himself in heaven, or in"—the good minister hesitated—"hell, as he says he is?"

"In that is involved the question of sincerity," replied the physician. "Presumably to him it is real. Why suppose he should want to make believe? Besides, if he is capable of insincerities, would he not be rational to that extent, sane in that particular function of his mind? To question his sincerity is to question to a corresponding extent his insanity. He no doubt feels and experiences the so-called comforts of heaven and the discomforts of hell."

"Awful, awful destiny indeed, but in it God has his purpose," reverently repeated the good minister. In this the thoughts of the two men were vastly different—their lives representing the two extremes, the good minister

considering, seeing God in everything; the physician not considering, not seeing God in anything.

"The condition is not a desirable one," rejoined the physician, his stern countenance reflecting little the extreme contempt such views excited. "On the contrary, it is perhaps without an equal in the long catalogue of human ills, but it can hardly be regarded as a destiny in the usual application of the term as meaning a pre-determined fate or invincible necessity. The unfortunate condition of your friend is the result of disease or, more clearly expressed to one not thoroughly schooled in this special field, he is to be regarded as a sick man; ill as one suffering of rheumatism or any other well-known disease, with the difference of the anatomical organ affected and the nature, cause, and intensity of the malady itself. Hardly, you see, to be looked upon as a destiny, unless disease in general is to be so regarded. Merely a sick man, and, considered from this viewpoint, surely you would not conclude that in his misfortune God had some purpose."

"I like to think of God as having a purpose in everything," answered the good minister, "but it had not occurred to me to think of the inmates of this place as sick people, the same essentially as the sick in the hospitals and elsewhere. If you so term it, are these not mentally sick, the others sick in a physical way? These sick in the mind, the others sick in the body?"

A sardonic smile passed over the face of the physician, and he spoke now with greater emphasis. "You forget that man in his entirety is a physical being, his mental forces of physical origin, his mind in all its powers and possibilities the work merely of his material brain."

"But I speak of the immaterial or spiritual," interrupted the good minister.

"You speak then of that which is without existence," quickly retorted the physician. "The immaterial in man is imaginative only. Other than the material, there

is, there can be, no man. In his physical make-up we have his all. Destroy the material brain, and you destroy all the mental powers. The so-called immaterial in his nature is but the work of the physical; his consciousness, his thoughts, his sentiments, the mental functions, one and all, of physical origin. Apart from the material there is no man."

A look of disappointment crossed the benevolent face of the good minister. Never before had his mind been so pointedly directed to the physical side of his being. Never before had it occurred to him to think of the mental in its real relationship to or connection with the physical—just how, in what way, the one is related to the other; just how, and to what extent, the one is dependent upon the other. That his thoughts, that his consciousness, that his hopes, that his sentiments, that his reverence, that his sense of honor, that all the conceptions of which the human mind is capable and through which this life is made attractive, and on which the hope of a future life is founded—were they really, were they truly the products of the physical? Had they really, had they truly no other source, no other origin than the material? Associated with them, connected with them, was there nothing of a higher, of a more exalted nature? As these reflections passed through his mind the expression of disappointment lingered on the face of the good minister. He fingered, pulled abstractedly at the gray-tinged hair of his temple. "You, then, would reduce the mind of man to the limits of flesh and blood," he said.

"And subject to the innate laws, the infirmities, the frailties of the flesh and blood," added the physician.

The look of disappointment deepened on the face of the good minister. His carefully groomed features took on an expression little short of an acute pain. "If that be true," he said, "the mental functions of man are fundamentally and essentially the same as the other organs of his physical being. Governed by fixed and preëstablished laws,

limited, hedged in by the very nature of its material parts, working not in compliance to a free and unhampered will, but doing only what it must do through the innate forces of its physical structure. Nay, Doctor, the mind of man must consist of something more, something that is not of the flesh and blood, something uninfluenced, unrestrained by the physiologic laws that govern the flesh and blood. Nay, nay, Doctor, that to a degree would render all of us irresponsible beings, reduce us to the plane of a physical beyond which we could not go, that would leave us just what material nature made us without the power to essentially change it."

Dr. Ruff himself could not have led more directly to the basal principles upon which his own beliefs were founded, could not have expressed himself in a way setting forth more clearly his own ideas as to the supremacy of the physical in the life of the individual. Not a dogmatic materialist when first he entered upon his studies of the human body, but in time made so by long and earnest application to its physiologic truths. Not at first questioning the source and limitations of human power, but in time subjecting every function to an investigation the most rigid and accepting nothing until the proof was irrefutably established. Every organ, every part, every function of the physical and mental man he had spared no time and effort to master. "And so we are as nature made us," the physician led on, noting the painful expression on the good minister's face, "both in the mental and physical functions unmistakably the creatures of basal principles unchangeable in all things fundamental. Not what by wish or choice we would be, but what by material barriers and developmental limitations we must be; not what by will would be most pleasing to us, but what by fixed and preëstablished principles is left for us. Do we not see, feel, hear in compliance with certain innate laws, and laws we are without the power to change? To the sense of taste bitter is bitter and sweet is sweet; and,

however much we might desire the contrary, we are powerless to bring it about. Fixed laws, set by nature, fundamental in function, innate in their application, we cannot change or control."

"Functions, though, of an inferior nature," suggested the good minister.

"Call them inferior if you will," continued the physician, "but the same is true when extended to every part of our physical being. From the lowest to the highest we encounter unchangeable, inexorable laws."

"But such, surely, Doctor, does not apply to the mind," urged the good minister.

"The mind," pursued the physician, "is not an exception to the general rule. All of the mental manifestations have their origin in the brain, a body organ of physical proportions and acting essentially the same as the other organs that go into man's material make-up, fulfilling its functions, doing its work in obedience to innate laws."

"Our reason, our judgment, our sense of honor, duty, our beliefs, our convictions," stoutly urged the good minister, "are they purely, solely of a material origin? Have we truly no choice in forming, in determining their character?"

"The beliefs, the convictions, the mental functions from first to last, from the most simple to the most complex," answered the physician, "have as their only origin the material cells of the brain, and one knowing even the elemental principles of cell life could hardly be so grossly unreasonable as to think for a moment he could change or control their action."

"In that do you not speak unmindful of the influence of the will?" interrupted the good minister.

"No, by no means," stressed the physician, warming as he approached the subject he loved so well—namely, the contemplation of the human intelligence in its higher functions, with especial interest and study directed toward its control. "The will, often in our thoughts, often men-

tioned, but in its real action seemingly of inconsequential results, I might say, is the expression of a wish or desire without the power to enforce it. We must see, we must believe, we must understand in compliance with the mental response, the result of cellular activity, a chemico-biological change, not controlled by any action the will may take. Of the proof of this we are reminded at every turn. If we are in pain, to will the contrary does not bring relief. If we are sad, to wish it otherwise is not to change the sadness into joy. If a remorse of conscience is heavy upon us, to attempt to will it away is an effort in vain. And so on through the long list of mental activities, varying and varied as they are, including as you will love, hate, the sense of right, wrong, any and all manifestations, they are not in their nature controlled by the will. It can incite action, it can in some instances within certain limitations inhibit action; but of the nature of the response, as determined by the results brought forth, it is powerless to determine. We must see, we must believe, we must understand, not as dictated by the will, but in compliance with a mental response by other influences guided. In this matter you will readily see we are not free agents even in the choice of our beliefs, our convictions; neither by will does it come within our power to change them."

The good minister sprang to his feet, his earnest face lit up with a pleasant smile. "In that, Doctor, you are mistaken. Men do change their beliefs, their convictions. I know they do."

"That the beliefs, the convictions of men change, no one doubts," continued the physician, the sardonic expression returning again to his face. "But the change does not come through any control of the mental response, influenced or determined by the action of the will. The intellectual centers still act and interpret in compliance with the same innate laws. In the change thus noted is seen only a mental response to a new or different stimulus. The will was not the deciding or determining factor. His

belief, his convictions, are not as formerly, but he did not change them himself, self here meaning his will. They were changed for him."

The good minister took a few turns about the office. Such views to one of his nature were extremely distressing. To reduce life to the basis of the physical, and a physical of its own laws inviolate, was to consider it in a light entirely new to him, and yet to an extent he was beginning to see some of the physiologic truths that were so strongly entrenched in the mind of the physician. He had often in his past life been made to realize the supremacy of the physical, a fact of everyday demonstration. Nor was it new to him that in many of the mental manifestations the forces of the will, however vigorously applied, were wholly ineffective to modify or change them. But that man really has such limited control over his mental functions, that they are so far automatic, self-determining in their nature and action, had never before seriously engaged his thought. "You, then, would make us all irresponsible beings, Doctor," commented the good minister, returning to his seat.

"In a sense, yes," answered the physician. "To fix a standard of responsibility is always difficult and often quite impossible. It must depend, as is easily perceived, upon the condition of the brain, an organ of material proportions and subject therefore to the diseases, the functional insufficiencies, the developmental faults that are so frequently encountered in other parts of the human make-up. Full mental responsibility must mean a normal brain, and the abnormal in humanity is often found."

To treat with his mental powers purely from the standpoint of the physical, added to which were the well-known shortcomings, the imperfections, the frailties, the limitations inevitably belonging to the physical, whereas he had always thought of them in an immaterial connection without material barriers, and to no fixed and preëstablished laws obedient, was a change too ultraradical for the mind

of the good minister. "Such ideas to me are preposterous," he exclaimed. "They are even more; I must regard them as unspeakably absurd. We cannot correctly reduce the mentality of man to the basis of the exclusively physical and to the laws by which the physical is governed. In us there is something that is not of the physical; something higher, something of a more kindred nature to the God who made us; something unrestrained, untouched, uninfluenced by the material; something not governed by the laws that control the material. In the mind of man there is something more."

"Such has been, I should say such is the popular belief," answered the physician, unruffled at the good minister's abrupt manner, "but a belief founded upon a lack of fundamental knowledge, a belief that knows nothing of the structure and workings of the human mind. We feel, we think, we know solely through the agency of the physical and a physical—"

"That, then, is to say that my conceptions, even of right and wrong, of good and evil, are determined by the physical, and that in them I am without a choice," interrupted the good minister.

"Without the physical you are without conceptions of any character, good or bad," led on the physician. "All of the mental expressions must come from the physical brain, and to presume to be able to place at naught the laws of the physical is a presumption that carries with it the power to change nature itself. Your conceptions are not your own, as determined by the will. You may use your mind, but you cannot change or control its innate laws. In us the physical is supreme and made so by the Power that made us. Physiologic laws we cannot annul. Either physically or mentally applied, sweet is sweet, and bitter is bitter, and to change it we cannot. You are material, your mind is material, of flesh and blood; your thoughts, your feelings, your sentiments, your beliefs, your convictions, your conceptions of right and wrong,

of good and evil, are of material origin and obedient to the innate laws of the material; and when the material is gone they are gone. Man throughout is a physical being."

"And does the awful condition of my friend come solely as the result of perversion or disease of the physical?" earnestly inquired the good minister.

"It can come of no other source," the physician answered. "Insanity is perversion or disease, and perversion or disease it must be of the physical, since it would scarcely be possible for any malady, however destructive or deadly in its nature, to seriously affect your fanciful immaterial."

"Enough, enough! Good-by, good-by!" exclaimed the good minister, and he hurriedly left the office, but not until some of the material seed so generously disseminated by the physician had found deep lodgment in his mind. Will they grow? will they multiply? will they mature? Will they bring forth others of their kind? Will their influence be felt in the future acts and life of the godly man? or will it pass with the passing hour? We will wait, we will see.

CHAPTER V

THE ATTEMPTED FLIGHT

PLACED safely beyond the walls inclosing the Asylum grounds and encouraged by a few hasty words bespeaking the freedom and happiness his escape must bring, Edgar Barton plunged bravely into a future uncertain and dark as the midnight hour through which he endeavored to make his way. Liberated from the Federal prison, freed from the mad cell that for a time had shut him in, but has the condition of the inward man been changed? If once a criminal, is he a criminal still? If once insane, has he left his insanity behind him? For an hour he rambled in the overgrown commons trying this direction, trying that direction, trying the other direction, turning, winding, now advancing, now retracing his steps, now bearing off to the right or the left as the decision of the moment veered him. But go where he would, turn in whatever direction he might, it seemed that he could not find a place from which the dim and scattered lights of the Asylum could not be seen. He had the feeling that to go forward would be an easy thing to do if he could only get beyond their sickly rays, if he could only shut them from his view; but go where he would, they followed him at every step. "Ah! a roadway," he murmured, when at length his wandering efforts brought him beyond the commons. "I may at last make the start," and, mending his steps, for two hours he hurried on, in what direction he did not know, to what end it had not occurred to him to inquire of himself. His mind was otherwise engaged. Questions of a different nature were beginning to urge themselves upon him with such an insistence as to drive all other considerations from his thoughts. "Is this freedom?" he presently inquired of himself, abating somewhat the speed of his onward progress. "Freedom? Yes, freedom, in that I

may go forward without the restraint of the four walls of my prison cell. Freedom? Yes, freedom, in that I may wend my way through this night of gloom with no thought of a barred and bolted door to stop me. Freedom? Yes, freedom, in that there is no roof above my head, no physical barriers to stay the onward march of my feet, *but is this freedom?*" The tone of the young man was full of dejection. He almost loitered now upon the way. "Freedom! Freedom!" he repeated, "but not the freedom I seek. To go forward, to face about and follow in another direction, to make off to the right, to turn to the left, to tarry here, to hasten there, to move on any way, anywhere, to any place, at any time, is not freedom, but a privilege of action that merely jeers and scoffs at my tormented soul."

The liberated inmate might now go where he pleased; but, go where he would, the old thoughts were rapidly assuming the uppermost place in his mind—the old fears, the old dreads returning again to harass and to torment him. "Freedom? For me there is no freedom," his reflections ran on. "From myself I cannot hide; from my own thoughts I cannot run away. Escape? There is no escape. In the criminal's cell, in the mad house locked, they were with me no less than at the present moment. Flee from them I cannot. Evasive in themselves, but to evade them is impossible. They go where I go. They go where I cannot go. To them a prison house is as nothing. To them all shackles, fetters, manacles are without control. By material barriers their freedom is not determined. Obedient to no force or influence other than that through the fulfillment or effects of which they come into existence, man for them has no means of restraint. Despite all locks and bars, they come and go. He cannot shut them in. He cannot keep them out. Their only prison house the silent cells of their secret abodes, the mystic keys to the magic chambers which have never known or felt the touch of man. I may go, I may flee, I may fly; but not

from the maddening thoughts that this moment hold high carnage in my distraught mind. I may go, I may run; but not from the deep oppression that stifles and smothers my tormented and struggling soul. If this is freedom, return me to confinement, make fast every crack and cranny of escape, or open wide the doors, for it means the same. In the awful burden of my mind there is no difference. Thought is thought, and in itself is its only master. Upon it the bolt is turned in vain. It comes and goes and comes, and no one can say, 'here is the limit, take heed that you exceed it not.'"

Under these depressing reflections the laggard strides of the young man had ceased entirely. He stood now motionless in his tracks, unmindful alike of the deep darkness of the advancing night and the dismal swamps with their heavy, damp fogs and noxious exhalations into which his flight had led him. *Hope—Despair*, in whose bosom have ye not found cause for battle? In whose soul have ye not the one with the other fought it out to a joyous or bitter victory? In whose life have ye not a gravestone marked either with the spotless marble tracings of the first or bearing the somber scrawl of the last? Standing thus in the midst of the conflict not yet decided, now Hope, now Despair, lessening or increasing the mental abyss into which his very consciousness was sinking, the thoughts of the young man turned back to the Asylum, the scene in the cell, the voice that had aroused him from his slumbers, the feelings excited, her arms about him clasped, her words of cheer and hope and confidence, their hurried but guarded escape from the building, his rambling in the tangled and overgrown commons, the dim and scattered lights, their sickly rays that followed him at every turn, at last the open roadway. Hope! In the darkness in which he stood there was no hope. Despair everywhere about him, its shadows were deeper growing. Escape! There is no escape. Freedom! There is no freedom. The scene from which he had so recently fled, the last to hold a conscious place in

his mind, was rapidly fading. Under its dying influence the struggling man turned to go back to the Asylum. But, alas! the impulse had come too late. This now he could not do. The mental dejection into which he was cast dispossessed him of the power of action. Not one retracing step could he take. An all-consuming weakness, the like of which he had never experienced, was extending itself to every part of his physical being, while in his mind the one sustaining picture was dimmer, dimmer growing. Hope! Despair! The conflict is nearing its close. His form trembles. Beneath the burden of his own weight, in the thick darkness his body reels, and he is enabled to keep his feet only through the support of a near-by object grasped in his outstretched hand. "What means this failing of the strength, this loss of motion?" murmured the despairing man, "this awful sense of oppression, this feeling that all without and all within is passing away? What means this consciousness that is not consciousness? Why the strange noises that beat upon my ears? Why the flashes of light streaming in upon—" His lips set, rigid in every muscle, for a moment his stiffened body, supported by the rugged cypress knee to which he clung, retained the upright posture; then relaxation, and the flaccid form of the pitiable man sank heavily to the cold, wet ground.

She had turned him out. With a word of cheer and confidence and hope, she had started him on the way, whither, whither? To what ultimate end? With what final results? Minutes passed. Hours passed. With the coming of day, the dismal swamp into which he had penetrated was hushed in its wonted nightly ribald. Light everywhere was replacing the heavy darkness, its bright rays streaming through the thick tangle of stunted and exuberant growth to fall reflectless on the heavy scum of the still and stagnant waters beneath. In the tree tops above his head the birds were chirping and flitting from bough to bough, a morning greeting in every warble, a song of joy and welcome in every throat; activity and life everywhere, com-

mingling with inactivity and death. Here a nook stilled by the passing night; there a quarter astir with the coming day. Nocturnal life asleep and dreaming in the sunlight and diurnal activity preparing for the repose the revolving hours will bring, and in it all and through it all the stricken man, unconscious, lies. Will he revive? Will he awake to the new scenes around him? Will he awaken to the welcome daylight, with everything the daylight brings, to the more welcome sunlight, with its cheer and warmth and comfort? Will he awaken to the memories, to the cares and trials of yesterday, to her words of parting full of hope and promise, to the utter dejection and despair that so readily crowded them from his mind? Will he revive? Will the deathlike unconsciousness tire out at last in its remorseless hold? Will the sleep of forgetfulness extend itself into that other sleep that has no physical awakening? Will he revive, or is this to mark the end of his young and troubled life? No, the end is not yet. No, he stirs. See, the heavy stagnant waters in which his limbs are submerged move with the feeble efforts beneath. No, not yet. See, his head turns from the cruel stone upon which it had fallen and by which the ugly wound on his pale cheek had been inflicted. No, not yet. See, the reviving sunlight falls now upon his young face, and he opens his eyes; but, the inner organs of sight irresponsive still, he does not see, and his eyelids slowly close again. Will the deep unconsciousness pass with the passing moments? Will his senses wake to a realization of his surroundings, to the condition into which the first few hours of his attempted flight have placed him, to the past from which he was trying to run away, to the unpromising, the uncertain, the unknown future? He moves more violently. His lips quiver, tighten, a frown, feeble at first, but gathering force and strength as it advances, sweeps his face. His brow is corrugated, his frame is convulsed with increasing muscular contractions. Either a lightening of the profound unconsciousness or else the harbinger

of the approach of that deeper sleep to which there is no physical end.

Nature's efforts to restore the stricken man are nature's signal that the powers of restoration are failing fast in their final struggles. Will he revive, or must the vital forces yield to the impending dissolution?

Once more his eyes open, and a light hitherto unseen is gathering in their hazy depths, an indication, perhaps, that the deep and enduring unconsciousness is at last relenting in its deathlike hold. He can now see the objects around him, indistinct, ill-defined in their forms, unfamiliar in their outlines, twisted, distorted, deformed through the imperfect function of the organs of sight; yet he sees. One step attained in the return of consciousness, a lightening of the deep coma which for hours enshrouded him completely from himself and the world about him. See, his efforts increase. He has found the cypress knee and by it is trying to pull himself into a sitting posture. Will he be able to do it? Will his remaining strength be equal to the task? Will his numbed fingers retain their hold? No, no, his efforts fail and in a sidelong fall he topples back to the ground, bringing his head nearer to the water's edge; but immediately he pulls up again and is able to retain his position. Sitting, his limbs still covered with the cold waters, the pallor of his face becomes frightful and every fiber of his physical being trembles with exhaustion. Is it too much for the forces of nature? Is it an extremity beyond which the physical cannot go? Will the struggling man retain what he has gained, or must he presently lose it all? Heat, which he needs so badly and without which the physical efforts must fail, will come with the reviving muscular activity. That much in his favor, but the awakening mental faculties must have the needed amount of blood, and in the upright position to supply it the heart encounters new difficulties. More strength is required, and it must come without urgent importunity. Alas! his head falls forward. His eyelids droop. A powerful relaxation

seizes anew upon his weakened frame. Suspended above the water, if his grip should fail! But, look, his grasp holds yet. He straightens himself, and a trace of color appears in his face. The threatened swoon which must have brought an end to all his earthly troubles is passing, while in his countenance is seen the return of a greater degree of consciousness.

"What is it?" he said. "What can it mean? What has befallen me? What these strange feelings, these strange surroundings?" His voice quivered, his form shook violently, his breath came noisy, hurried, irregular. "It has the appearance of water," he presently continued, dipping his free hand (with the other hand he still clung to the cypress knee) into the swamp. "Yes, water, and this is dirt." He swept the same hand over the ground. "But both look, both feel queer, unnatural, both seem strange to my senses. Where am I? What is it? What can it mean? What has befallen me? He looked to his right, where, in the distance, on a more elevated part of the lowlands, grew a clump of stunted oaks. "Trees," he murmured, gazing at them intently; "but they too are out of their natural form, twisted, knotted, dwarfed. O, what is it? What mean all these strange, these unnatural—" His eyes swept the horizon above him; and, as he gazed, an indescribable expression set his features as if they were cast in marble. "The sun," he murmured. "If this is time and not eternity, its high meridian betokens close on to the hour of noon, but what day, what week, what month, what time, what season? Autumn, winter, spring? It cannot be earth's summer sun, for in my flesh, if flesh it is and I am human, there is present the creep of chill. On earth high noon, but what season, what place, what—" The marble set in his face relaxed. In his dilating eyes came a new gleam of intelligence. From the shadowy consciousness in which he viewed the objects about him, a consciousness scarcely superior to the perceptive acme of an irretrievable dream, the struggling

and perplexed mind of the young man was turning to a consideration of his own bodily situation. He let go the friendly cypress knee to which he had clung so long and, bending above the waters in which his limbs were submerged, seized upon one of them and brought it into view, but at the sight of it his face clouded, a wild shriek burst from his lips. He let it go, or rather forcibly hurled it from him, the benumbed and senseless member to quickly disappear beneath the heavy scum and the terrified man to watch the sluggish waves caused by the disturbance quiet themselves. But in the meantime his hands thrust forward as if to guard against a reappearance. Then with an impetuous movement he seized upon it again and lifted it from the waters. "Dead, dead, dead!" he exclaimed in a voice of despair. "My very limbs seem dead, motion gone, sensation gone. O God, what is it? What has befallen me? O God, what can it mean?"

A moment he sat silent, motionless, a suspension in which action, in which thought was utterly incapable of the power to move, of the power to determine, an inaction, an indecision supreme; but it was for the moment only. Resignation was not thus to surrender. With the next moment a new purpose was born in his mind. With the next moment he was frantically searching his pockets, and with the next moment the keen blade of a small knife has been thrust deeply into his thigh. "Ah, not dead, only benumbed, palsied," he exclaimed when he saw the blood. "Not dead. My limbs are not dead, but, O God, what can it mean? What has befallen me?"

CHAPTER VI

THE TRANSFORMATION

PULLING himself to his knees, to fall back again, tugging, struggling, at length Edgar Barton succeeded in regaining his feet; but his head felt heavy, unsteady, and the vessels in his neck were throbbing and choking him with every stroke of his bounding heart. He could now understand, in an imperfect way, something of his physical surroundings; the roadway in which he stood; the dismal swamps through which it led; the stagnant waters, sluggish with their heavy burden of pernicious scum; the matted and tangled growth of marshy life; the sunlight that brought the warmth to his chilled and benumbed body; the October breeze that fanned his troubled and puzzled brow.

In all of this there was a sense of familiarity, a feeling of recognition, though vague, indefinite, strange, and changing sometimes with such an abruptness as to cause him to question, to doubt it all; yet in a way, to a certain extent, he could understand it. But not so the fact of his presence there. By what means, through what agencies had he arrived in that place? When, for what purpose, and how long he had been there were questions of the correct answer to which he had not the slightest idea. A space or gap, the breadth of which he could form no conception of, separated him completely from the last act or thought of which he could recall the faintest knowledge. True, he was conscious of a past, but it was a vague sort of consciousness, recalling a past of long ago and one with which he could not associate any definite time or place—a past far removed from his present condition and having, as he believed, no possible connection with it. "What mad fate has thus transformed me?" he murmured to himself when these reflections he could no longer sustain. "Have I not feeling, sensation, a conscious knowledge of myself? Do I

not know of my presence here? Am I not aware of these strange and unaccountable surroundings?"

He gazed anew at the scummy waters, the tangle of shrub and brush, the changing patches of light and shadow. "Is this not," he continued in sterner tones, "the firm earth beneath my feet? Is not this a roadway along which I may go?" In the last question was the thought that turned the mind of the astonished young man in another direction, and under its influence the look of painful surprise so marked on his pale features instantly gave way to an expression of decided purpose. His one controlling idea now was to get away, to flee the scene of which he knew naught, to go somewhere, though in what direction, to what place, for what purpose, in his mind there was not the slightest conception.

He moved forward, but to do so was a task demanding all his strength. His limbs were heavy, his muscles stiff, sore, and his uncertain and changing senses staggered him at every step. He turned into that end of the road leading back in the direction from whence he had come, back toward the Asylum; but of this he was without knowledge, without thought. Such a place to him now had no existence. The one purpose of getting away, of simply pressing forward, occupied all of his distraught mind; and in this one purpose on he struggled for some time undisturbed.

That part of the swampy section into which he had penetrated terminated rather abruptly in a sort of tableland elevated well above the waters except at the most flooded seasons. Here a settler had commenced to build a home, the evidence of which was seen in a small patch of ground, half an acre or more, from which the saplings had been cut, the sprouts uprooted, and the larger trees hacked round the bark after a manner to take their life by degrees. In this patch, hedged about by brush, roots, rocks, and logs, were to be seen a few widely dispersed cornstalks, slender in form as if the species belonged to a delicate

variety, or the soil, planting, season, or tending had been such as to hinder and stunt their growth.

This sure sign of the work of man caused Edgar Barton to stop. "A patch of corn," he said as he gazed intently, or of such, to my senses, it seems." He approached nearer and plucked one of the diminutive ears, opening its thick and seared cover. "Yes, corn, corn," he repeated when he had examined it more closely. It seemed to trouble him, to frighten him. He threw it down, hastily concealed it in the sand at his feet, smoothed the ground, then instantly started on, pressing now rapidly ahead, but where to he did not know; in a painful hurry, but why he could not tell.

Advancing thus, the small clearing, with the thoughts it had stimulated, was not out of his mind when he came upon broad fields skirting both sides of the highroad. The farmhouses in the near distance he could plainly see, and the mirthful prattle of the playing children within them and about them at times came distinctly to his ears. "What!" he exclaimed as he lessened the mad pace of his onward rush. "The abode of man, the laughter and mirth of children." His countenance changed, on his brow an expression hitherto unobserved. Something in the scene, the sounds, the voices, the surroundings, the man himself, or something in the commingling of some of them, or all of them, which we do not know, their subtle influence being hidden to our senses, dispelled a part of his morbid fears, and Edgar Barton walked on in a more tranquil frame of mind. But in this condition of partial relief he had not gone very far until his mind, heretofore completely occupied with other thoughts and problems, began to question the course he was now pursuing.

"Where art thou going?" he inquired of himself. "To what end dost thou bend thy weary steps? and, once the journey over, what thy object, aim, or purpose? When? *There* what dost thou expect to do? Will it be with thee then as it is now, or will it be different? Where is the

there of which thou thinkest, leagues in advance on this highroad, at its termination, or can it only be attained by traveling in some other direction?" These were some of the questions that passed through the inquiring, the doubting, the troubled mind of the young man; but, strive as he would, search as he might, he could find no answer. In all the wide world he had no place to go. He was utterly destitute of object, aim, or purpose. There was nothing to hold him where he was. There was no knowledge of ties behind him. There was no hope or promise in the future.

Aimless, purposeless, hungry, weak, weary, footsore, he struggled on, anywhere, any way the road turned, to any place his passively wandering steps might guide him.

Erelong he found himself upon a bridge. The waters beneath were sluggish, muddy, scarcely moving in a deep and even channel. He walked to the edge and looked over. His face grew pale, paler; his breath became short, shorter, then stopped completely, while a violent trembling shook him until large drops of perspiration stood upon his face and brow. "Why not?" he murmured, when his agitation grew less. "It is shocking, despairing, maddening even to think of; but the thought in the doing must quickly end. Others, many of them, have made it their decision. To part with this life is an obligation no one can annul, an obligation all *must* fulfill, and to do it in preference or by choice is but to anticipate nature in the matter of time. Then why should one question or hesitate?" He shook his head. "No, no, not now, not now," he murmured and walked on.

Soon night was beginning to overtake him. The darkness had already passed the twilight stage before he realized its approach. He had lost the regular measured tread of time, and that night should come at all surprised him. But while the darkness deepened around him, shutting out completely many features of the landscape and investing others with dim and shadowy outlines, a

clearer conception illuminated the inward man. From the time of his escape until the present moment his condition had been such as to interdict, for any length of time, rational deliberation on any course of procedure. The hopeless dejection born of the disappointments of a physical freedom in which there is no relief to one in his mental condition, and the deep and prolonged unconsciousness following it, dispossessed him utterly of the power of consecutive rational determination, rendering him thereby an irrational prey to the cruel and unsympathizing elements and objects of his surroundings; in which condition, sometimes better, sometimes worse, but at no time approaching anything near the normal, he had come down to the darkness of the beginning night. The clouds, which had so completely shut in his mental horizon, in part melted away, and now he could understand as he had not been able to understand before something of the true conditions in which he was placed. He realized that he must do something, that he must arrive at some kind of a decision, but in his very mind was an impossible barrier that separated the realization from the results in the imperative need of which was found its origin. His aimless wanderings must give place to some determinate purpose. He must make up his mind. He must reach a decision. But to do this upon doubt was a difficult task, and of anything certain he was unassured.

Adjudged unsound of mind by those competent to pass judgment, he did not know the true condition of his own mentality. Sane or insane, he often asked himself the question, but as often his consciousness was forced to return the answer: there is some doubt, and in this doubt, it mattered not what he persuaded himself to do or believe, how complete and thorough his convictions of the rationality of an act or decision, in time he would fall back into the abyss of uncertainty; in his clearer moments afraid to trust his intelligence, not certain that he could safely follow the dictates of his mind, not secure even in the

secret silent councils of his own thoughts. Therefore, of necessity, of compulsion, questioning everything with which he was thrown into a conscious relationship—earth, air, light, sound, water, any and all things for which his senses, special and otherwise, had any form of recognition, and, in turn, by a necessity more urgent, by a compulsion more powerful, receiving from all alike the common answer: "There is doubt; to place your sanity beyond question, further evidence must be had; there must be added more proof of a positive nature. Of their own qualities the mental forces are incapable of judging. Reason, in the very nature of its production, must be disqualified to bespeak of its purity. You have been declared unsound in mind, and your present conjuncture tends to confirm it. You cannot even as much as name the day of which this is the night, the week, the month, the year. You are lost completely."

These and many similar thoughts crowded his mind, flooded his soul. He stopped to gaze at the stars above him, which, buried in the far distant and gloomy dome of heaven, appeared to his perverted sight as specks of pale light; and as he strained his vision that he might inspect them more closely he became convinced that either in them or in himself there was present the unmistakable evidence of change.

"Why should I persist in hope," he exclaimed, "when the proof of it confronts me in all that I see, think, and do? If it is true, it is true, and to continue in unreasonable hope or disbelief is but to furnish further testimony of its truth."

These words were spoken out of the depths of a despairing consciousness; and for a time the man was silent, an interval of thought too deep for utterance, too terrible for expression, or a blank in which perception itself is lost in the mysteries and intricacies of its own production, or else mayhap a failure of intrinsic mental energy to record its kinetic force.

The young man had at last been driven to the admittance of his insanity. His condition, his surroundings, all things of which he had any conscious knowledge or even subconscious form of recognition bespoke it now in positive, in undoubting terms.

"Awful decree of Providence!" he bitterly complained, "to do and not know what one does, to feel when sensation is not to be trusted, to hear out of obedience to the very laws of sound, to see not in harmony with the things observed, to know without the aid of knowledge—it is my doom. To such ways by the cruel decrees of fate my footsteps must follow. To determine the nature of this very darkness in which I grope, I am without the power. What is it? my soul inquires. The black shades of my own lunacy, the natural shadows of the physical night? or is it not darkness at all? Hark! How bright they appear! Such illusions! Such illusions!"

The way of the stricken young man had brought him to the crest of an elevation overlooking the city, and it was at the first glimpse of the city's great lights these fervent exclamations burst from his lips. With what indescribable feelings he looked down upon them! Feelings made up of despair, doubt, fear, hope, with the many sensations of which each is composed and their product as a commingled and compounded whole. Momentarily undergoing changes, varying to the uttermost limits, each in the possibilities of its own productions, and all to the extent of their combined creations, meanwhile rushing with the chaotic speed of maddened thought through the highly responsive chambers of his distraught mind, in the matchless splendor of the lights he was beginning to see the most beautiful stars upon which earthly man had ever gazed.

"Fallen stars," he breathed, "stars come to the earth, or else I walk the immaterial stretches of heaven's limitless expanse; stars by the sacred light of which the angels keep watch; stars that bedeck the very arches—" The

sentence he could not finish, for about him transformation and transfiguration, operating through the open avenues of his perverted understanding, assembled their mysterious and miraculous phantoms in countless number. The center of this orderly pandemonium, yet lawless and disorderly, imagination, stripped of its incumbrances and encouraged by a plasticity infinitesimally quick to give form to its faintest glimmerings, he, though finite still, saw in the perspective that which he conceived to belong to the infinite. Quick like an angel's breath banishing the gloom of sin, light not blinding to his sense of sight, but brighter by far than any earthly splendors, dispelled the cover of darkness, and out of the fleeting shades arose a city celestial in build. Miraged within the mad reaches of his brain were the great white throne, the gates of pearl, the streets of gold. He saw the angels, and he heard them sing. "Glory to God!" he exclaimed. "It is heaven, it is heaven at last, and the strange past that ends here is the season of death. Marvelously beautiful! Infinitely exquisite! The beginning of an untroubled life, the promise of time, the realization of eternity, the aim of existence, the fruitage of death! I have reached God's presence. Behold! I see him now."

But, lo! while the bewildered man gazed enraptured on the matchless splendors, the scene, too beautiful for earth, too heavenly for temporal endurance, too divine for sin and time, too sacred for a world profane, began to dim with the ever-active presence of finite change. "Ah, is it to fade?" he gasped. "Stay, O Mutability, thy destructive force! But, no, it cannot fade, it cannot change. It is indestructible; it is imperishable; it is eternal; it will endure forever. But it is fading," he exclaimed, "or else my senses fail me. Beauty indescribable, splendor unimaginable! It thins, it fades, it melts, it evaporates, it is going, it is gone! But, ah, what is it I see in its stead? A beautiful lawn, grass-covered and green, trees, vines, flowers, a house, material and made by human hands,

fields, gardens, orchards, fruits, mountains in the distance, and a stream near by, its sparkling waters clean, fresh, swift, a meadow, cattle, sheep feeding in the sunlight. It is of the earth. It is of the world. It is of man and man in the temporal state, man in the body, man in the flesh; but it too is dimming, changing; but it too is passing, fading, melting away. No, not so. No, it is the coming night, the falling darkness. See, a light within the house; an open book upon the table; they kneel around it as if in devotion. See! see! An altar of prayer, a family altar, a child, a little boy with upraised hands looks to heaven. Father! Mother! Mother, dear! The home of my childhood, the altar of my youth!" One moment, the scene vanished, a breath blew it away, and Edgar Barton started forward as if impelled by some irresistible force.

CHAPTER VII

ARRESTED AGAIN

IN nature, to man's limited comprehensive powers, there is ever that which is more or less of a mystery. In perverted nature the mystery must ever be greater, the greatest perhaps of which his intelligence is capable of forming any conception. The mental ebullition in which, to Edgar Barton's perverted mind, had appeared the heavenly city, as to him it had been pictured by his mother when, a small boy, he stood at her knees, and the family altar scenes, vivid and fresh as when heightened and magnified by his childish fancies, remind us of some of the phenomenal possibilities to which the perverted faculties may reach. But these are only possibilities in part, possibilities half revealed, for with the fading of the mental picture, if picture it can be called, there passed from the mind of the young man all former knowledge of himself, a lapse of memory, the scientists tell us, in which the past life with everything it contains sinks into an oblivion as complete and perfect as if the existence had never been. A thorough blotting out of all that is behind him. A new man, a new life, in that there is not the slightest consciousness of the old. To that extent the deliverance Edgar Barton had hoped for at last had been attained. To that extent destiny for a time at least had extended to him the kind hand of relief. The old thoughts, the haunting, the tormenting memories from which he was trying to flee had been eluded. If ever a criminal, he is not a criminal now, for in his mind there is not the faintest knowledge of a crime committed. If once insane, the insanity has been lost in the forgotten past, and with sanity is spared the painful ordeal of further contention. He is no longer under the necessity of asking himself the awful question: "What is the state of my mind?" The uncertainty of

that had been replaced by a certainty too innocent to question. With him now, it is, or it is not, without the slightest consideration for the probabilities and possibilities of any perversion, its attendant extremes and hideous malformations. He had no recollection of the Federal prison, the Asylum, the business affairs in which he became hopelessly entangled, the events leading up to his arrest, the trial, his conviction, or his attempted escape. It was all blotted out completely. Preceding the business misfortune, the occurrence of which had sent him to prison, there had been times in which he was greatly puzzled and troubled to understand himself, seasons of longings and desires of an intense nature and for conditions and things for which at all other times he had the strongest feelings of aversion. True, these periods were not long (a few hours to two or three days), but they annoyed him greatly, and their constant dread at all times threw a long dark shadow into his young life, each day beginning with the hope and prayer that it will not come, and each day ending with a thanksgiving that it did not come, or that it has come and gone. But of all this, too, he was now relieved, not even as much as a subconscious memory of their former existence remained to torment him. The old thoughts, depressive, threatening, gloomy, and prompt to recur at the slightest suggestion, are they really gone and gone never to return? The old dread, the old uncertainty, the oppressive dread, the painful uncertainty—and a dread and uncertainty for which he could never assign a cause—are they lost and lost for all time? Will they not come again to crowd their unwholesome and distracting presence upon him? Is the relief, the freedom to be permanent, or is it merely a respite that soon must end? Will the transformation last? A life to full manhood with everything in the past taken from it. A life to full manhood with even the memories, scenes, associations of childhood, forgotten. A life to full manhood with no knowledge of home, father and mother. A life to full

manhood with nothing behind it. Its beginning a dark highway, a heavy October night, and the flickering lights of the unknown city beyond him.

These are some of the changes wrought in the mental man, some of the possibilities of the perverted mind. But what of the physical man? Here, too, are shown some of the results of the transformation. Here, too, we see the quick-maturing fruits of the change; his improved gait, a step now firm and resolute. His general mien of a different cast. His unhesitating, unquestioning, unwavering onward motion. The expression of his face if it could have been seen in the darkness. The determined look in his eye and, more noticeable still, in the physical aspects, the change in his long and disordered hair, not the ultra-fictitious white of the unrestrained imagination, not the heavily sprinkled gray of more reserved and popular taste, but of a whiteness to greatly confuse, if not safely conceal, the identity of the wearer. The relief the long-sufferer had experienced within was revealing itself in his every outward bodily act and expression. How handy must be nature in the metamorphic craft! how dexterous, how quick she is to shape the external man to conform to her internal changes!

Thus transformed, a new man mentally, a very different man physically, in his mended gait, Edgar Barton soon found himself within the city. The hour was late, but the streets were still thronged and astir with people; crowds swarming into and emerging from the open shops, salesmen within and salesmen at the doors declaiming and urging their wares upon all alike. Men, old and young; women, homely and fair; extreme youth, and the other extreme of life, with every intervening age. Coming, going, passing, repassing, hastening on to some urgent business or loitering in idle pastime; the greetings of friend with friend, a token or word of recognition, acquaintance with acquaintance, the silent passing of stranger by stranger. Motion, activity, stir, bustle, hurry, tumult, business, idleness,

amusement, pastime, joy, gladness, mirth, delight, transport, sorrow, sadness, grief, distress, regret, dejection, into all of which the fated footsteps of Edgar Barton had led him, and at the presence of which he gazed in the deepest perplexity.

"Fruits, sweet, fresh, the most choice," cried the corner fruit vender. Edgar was conscious of a sense of hunger, and this expression of the needs of his physical nature was made more urgent by the artful display of the fruits and their inviting odors. He looked at them longingly, but passed them by. All was so strange, so new to him, he could not get the consent of his mind to stop. Soon this part of the city was behind the new-born man, and he was threading his way into still more congested sections, at the increased life, noise, stir, and confusion of which he often lessened his pace in unspeakable wonder. The jammed and crowded streets, the glittering lights, the towering buildings, how strange they appeared to him, how inexpressible the sensations they stirred in his mind, and yet in his bosom there was a vague feeling of familiarity. Hastening now in the terrible beauty and strangeness of his surroundings, and now scarcely moving in the deep abstraction engendered by the unutterable wonder that filled his soul, the advancing steps of the young man were completely halted at the intersection of two overcrowded streets, each thoroughfare pouring its contending and urgent stream of humanity in opposite directions. Cumbersome street cars (loud in their grating and discordant sounds), noisy automobiles, horse-drawn vehicles, restless pedestrians chafed and fretted at the delay their impatience prolonged by crowding one upon the other.

At the center of the crossing, stationed there to direct the traffic and keep down the congestion, was an officer of the law, a large man, dressed in a great blue coat, buttoned up to the chin, with his well-polished badge of authority plainly in view. "Move on! Move on!" he

imperiously commanded with the dignity of his office, indicating the direction by motion of his head and hands. Presently the crowd thinned; and Edgar Barton, who had been watching his chance, started to cross the street; but he had only gotten a few paces when the officer stopped him. "Where to, young man?" the officer sternly inquired, his trained observance noting at a glance Edgar's unusual appearance, his youthful features strikingly set forth by the abundant growth of white hair, and, of especial interest to the officer, the wound on his cheek, now of unsightly appearance because of its neglected condition, but of the presence of which as yet Edgar knew nothing. "Where to, young man?" the officer roughly repeated, eying his new captive with increasing interest when he did not immediately reply. "Ay, where to, young man?" Ay, ay, indeed, young man, whither thy fated course? Alas! whither? whither? Nay! search his mind as he would, he could not find an answer. Nay! nay! he could no more tell the officer where he was going than he could have satisfactorily explained where he had been. A new man in a new world, and as yet without a future in his mind that had taken any definite form. Whence cometh? Whither goeth? Nay! nay! in all of his soul he could find no answer. In what life has there been a like crisis? Upon what similar brink has the foot of man paused in inquiry? A new man in a new world, the past hidden, the future unexplored, even in premeditated thought. Whither? whither? to what end? to what purpose? Aimlessly drifting with the tide of his unguided footsteps as the dream-born perceptions drift in the mental sea of the unconscious sleeper. Whither? whither? to what end? to what purpose? In the officer's interference was the first awakening; an impediment against which he had suddenly found himself, against which frequently others of us must find ourselves if our thoughts are to turn into different channels. Perhaps not unlike the immature child in the midst of danger or other conditions demanding discreet and quick

decision, the intuitive forces, difficult to understand, but of masterly action when once aroused, were not slow in coming to Edgar Barton's aid. His new life was beginning to separate itself into different periods: the present in which he faced the officer's unanswerable inquiry; the past as yet of scarcely an hour's duration; the future but dimly perceived. "May I beg your pardon," he said, when the officer for the third time demanded a reply; "my purpose was to gain the opposite side of the street. In that can there be an offense?"

"Take care with your intrusive inquiries. I want none of them," stormed the big patrolman, hurling in his superior strength the young man into the gutter.

"Sir, again I beg your pardon," said Edgar, returning himself from the gutter, and approaching close to the officer. "I sought only to answer your question; and if in the answer there was that which appeared to you intrusive, kindly allow me to assure you it was a misinterpretation of your own. I meant no more than a civil and courteous reply."

"Humph! Civil; courteous; a misinterpretation of my own," growled the big officer, narrowly observing his captive, "and so no doubt you would account for that wound on your face. Come," the officer said, seizing Edgar by the arm. "Trifle not with me; your name, address, and occupation."

At this demand of the officer Edgar's face clouded. "Name, address, occupation," the words bore down upon him with such force as to crowd all other thoughts from his mind. For the instant he was rendered oblivious to the noisy streets about him, oblivious to the officer who stood scanning him carefully from head to foot, conscious only of the awakening realization that even to himself he was a stranger. Name, he had no name. Address, occupation, the words were almost new to him. "Come, come," said the officer, forgetting in his interesting prisoner some of his wonted official dignity. "Your behavior, your very

appearance mark you at once as highly suspicious, and in duty as an officer of the law I must insist on an explanation."

"Seek it then of the gods, who must know all," the young man in childlike simplicity answered.

"An ill-befitting source for the information desired," rejoined the puzzled officer, puzzled both at his own forbearance and the look with which the prisoner's unexpected reply was accompanied, a look in all of his official career the like of which he had never witnessed. Not the expression of defiance, not the expression of compliance, but an expression, as the old officer often afterwards declared, both plainly revealed and secretly hidden, an expression at once full of meaning and at the same time meaningless. But in no expression, however puzzling, was the big officer to long tolerate the disregard of his authority, nor was it in his nature, officially or otherwise, to be ruled by a spirit of forbearance. "Come, come, young man," he said, shaking Edgar with all the violence of his rising resentment. "Think not to treat with levity the mandates of authority, or to even lightly ignore the demands of those invested with its powers. Only by a satisfactory explanation of that wound on your cheek, your name, address, and occupation—"

"May I not—" Edgar tried to explain.

"You may go to the lockup," the officer roughly retorted, and once more the doors of restraint were opening to the approaching footsteps of the unfortunate man.

CHAPTER VIII

AT THE POLICE STATION

"IN there, young man," said the officer, pointing to an open door, "where you are to await your turn."

Edgar complied. What else could he do? Alas! in the days gone by how many in that room of that human jail had awaited their turn! Alas! in the days yet to come how many must pause in that journey we call life to await the same issue! Can it be that they are there by preference? Can it be that, through some choice of their own, such a place is sought, or is it that an unrelenting destiny directs their course hither, marks out the path their feet must follow?

Pausing at the very threshold of his new prison, in caution perhaps at first of the imperfect illumination its one ill-conditioned light afforded, though later held there still, erect, stiff, by the mental conflict waging within, the din and intensity of which was reaching and convulsing the uttermost depths of his soul, it was some moments before the newborn man could bring himself to a realization of his surroundings and to even a partial understanding of the condition in which he was placed. Only a few hours ago endowed with a consciousness of his existence, a life to young manhood without a past, left now to himself, he struggled hard to call to his knowledge or recollection even one fragment of the life he knew by nature must have preceded the period in which his being was at present cast. But search in his mind as he might, out of all the hours and days and weeks and months and years of which that time must have consisted, not even one moment of it could he recall, not so much as the tiniest fragment had the faintest existence in his memory. To him it was as dead and forgotten as if in his life a past there had never been. Behind him, other than the incidents, the happen-

ings, the consciousness of this one strange night, there was only an inconceivable vacancy, an illimitable void, an endless, a boundless blank. Nothing, nothing.

"Was man, was human, was mortal ever before placed in such a condition?" he said to himself as, in hurried and painful thought, he walked the narrow confines of his feebly lighted prison. "It is strange, it is strange, it is unaccountably, it is inexplicably strange, but true, none the less true," he continued in outspoken thought. "Behind me there is nothing, an echoless, a rayless, a dumb, a dead past—all, everything blotted from the mind; all, everything stricken from the memory; all, everything dead to the recollection; all, everything severed completely, from my present life. The past—I have no past. Yesterday—of the things, of the events, of the happenings, of the incidents, of the occurrences, even of a yesterday, in my mind, in my memory, in my intelligence, in my knowledge—I am without the slightest token, without the faintest, the remotest recollection. Yesterday! of a yesterday in my life I have no conscious realization. Yesterday! of a yesterday in my life I cannot speak. Yesterday! to a yesterday in my life I turn in vain. Yesterday! to a yesterday in my life I look in utter darkness. Last week, last month, last year. O, why to me as if it had been ten thousand times ten thousand years ago? O, why to me as if it had been lost, lost forever? Last week, last month. O, why to me as if it had been sunk into a bottomless, a limitless void? O, why to me as if it had never, never been? Inexplicable, inconceivable, but true, true—a vast nothingness, irresponsive, immovable, dark, silent, dead—a vast nothingness into which my mind, my soul, my all has been totally, irretrievably engulfed—a vast nothingness to which I turn, to which I look, to which I call in vain."

For some moments the lips of the young man were hushed in an unutterable silence, tense rigid moments, moments in which the human soul, pent in a stifling and

murky prison, beats upon its walls, strives, struggles to break away from its limiting, its appalling darkness, but in this particular life engulfed as if by an impenetrable, an immovable wall of granite.

"True, true," he presently continued in thought less turbulent, "it is lost and lost beyond recall. It is dead, dead to my knowledge. It is dead, dead to my memory. No time, no place, no incident, no scene, no act, no thought no feelings, no recollections, no associations, no object, no person, no thing, nothing but this one night, the crowded streets through which I was brought here and my presence in this cramped and ill-kept chamber—lost, utterly lost, a blank, a blank, a blank. Had I not once a conscious past? Lived I not once somewhere, in some way, after some manner? Yes, yes, it must have been, it must have been. Such are the ways of life, such are the requirements of nature. It must be so, it must be so; an existence somewhere, something behind me, something in the past; a yesterday, a last week, a last year—such must have been my portion, such must have been my lot—memories, associations, things other than those of which I have knowledge, things apart from this night. But how, by what means, through what agencies are they dead to my understanding? How, by what means, through what agencies have they been stricken from my mind? How, by what means, through what agencies have they been driven from my life?"

The tones of the young man grew more intensely inquiring. "How, by what means, through what influences does it appear to me as if I only this night was born into the world? As if I only this night was given my being? Strange, unspeakably, inexplicably strange, but it is true, it is true, there is nothing behind me. I have no past. It is as if my life had just begun, conscious only of this one night and of these restraining walls."

He stopped his restless strides, stopped as if an adamant barrier had suddenly, precipitantly thrown itself

across his way, as if an impassable gulf had unexpectedly, instantly opened itself to block his course—staggering, stunning realization—restraining walls. The brain of the young man darkened.

"This, this is a prison," he continued, mastering once more the powers of speech. "Locked within the confines of these dirty dimensions, barred from the strange world without, denied the privilege to go at will, cast within the limits of physical restraint; this a prison, this a prison," the young man repeated in accent, in voice more calmly considerate, "the insignia of dishonor, the badge of disgrace, the sequence of crime, the mark, the wages of sin, *restraining walls*, my birth chamber, as it were, a place beyond which I may not go—a jail to contaminate, to pollute my swaddling garments."

Darker now the thoughts which arose to his lips, more strangely painful the mental struggle waging in his mind. "Am I unknowingly the perpetrator of some foul deed? Have I defiled my hands in an act to warrant this prison cell? Have I besmeared my life to such an extent the world must shut me in, to such an extent that mankind fears the contact of my freedom, to such an extent that the contagion of my liberty would become a danger to those without? This a prison! *I a prisoner!*"

He held to the words as if to fix them more definitely in his mind, as if to assure and reassure himself of their real, their true significance. "Restraining walls," he presently led on, "this a prison! I a prisoner! Can it be that some crime in its merited atonement has guided my erring footsteps hither? Can it be that, through some breach of the law, I have made my way to this human jail? Can it be that, through some unbecoming act upon my part, injured justice, in vindication of the violation, has sent me here? Can it be that this is the result of some felony committed in my dark, dead past, the fruits of some cruel, some inhuman, some awful deed of which I never knew the meaning? This a prison! I a—"

The outspoken meditations of the young man were here interrupted by a commotion in the hall without.

"O, please, sir; please, sir," nearer came the tones of a pleading, suppliant voice. "Don't, don't, O, please, sir, don't take me in there. I will not do it any more, never, never, never. O please, sir, take pity on me. Won't you, kind sir, let me off this one time? Don't, don't, O please, sir, don't take me in there. I promise not to do it again, never, never, never. The beads were so pretty, and I wanted them so badly I almost forgot that it was wrong. O please, sir, won't you have mercy this one time? I will never ask it any more."

"Shut up," said the sergeant, roughly shaking his prisoner as he dragged her to the door.

"O please, sir; please, sir," tearfully pleaded the girl.

"Will you shut up?" growled the officer, hurling the girl into the room with such violence that she fell to the floor. "There, now, petty thief," he sneeringly added, poking with his big club the frail and half-starved form of prostrate girl. "You may count your precious beads at your leisure, but take care about any more of these damned pitiful wails." Then with a final poke of the official club, more positive than any yet administered, that the recollection and restraint thereof might be of a duration consistent in every way with the standards and customs of all such places, measuring up to the latest and most improved ideas, the officer locked the door and left the poor girl to her stolen beads and smothered sobs.

Another impediment in the life of the newborn man, or perhaps it is best likened to a milestone to mark a place in the existence upon which he seemed just entering. Not only did it serve to turn his thoughts away from himself, to render him, for the time, unmindful of the mystery of his past life, the even greater mystery, if such be possible, of his confinement in that human jail, but in almost instant evidence was a different result.

Touched by the pleading and pitiful tones of the girl

and the brutal and inhuman treatment she had received at the hands of the cruel officer, he was immediately at her side. The innate qualities of his nature, in the fading out of his past life, had not been lost, nor had they been materially changed from the original in their long and ineffectual contentions with the abnormal. His soul, in tender and genuine sympathy, went out to the neglected and crushed bit of humanity at his feet.

"Of young and tender years, scarcely more than a child," he said to himself, as he gently, tremblingly wiped the hot tears from her eyes and brushed back the disordered hair from her sallow and bony face. The hand of kindness. Who is so utterly irresponsible as to know not its touch, as to feel not its thrill? Under its influence, the injured girl hushed her sobs. Though infrequently experienced, she readily recognized its true benevolence, and in its warmth was a promise of hope and assurance to her bruised and aching heart.

"O kind sir," she said, extending her work-scarred and emaciated hands to Edgar, "won't you help me? Won't you take me from this place? O kind sir, I did wrong, I did wrong, I know I did wrong, but I promise never, never, never to do it any more, never, never, never, never again. O kind sir, won't you, can't you help me?"

Edgar's hands trembled more violently as he assisted the girl to her knees.

"There, there now," he said. "They must not, they will not hurt you."

"Will not hurt me?" the girl repeated in repressive sobs, "but he did hurt me, and he will do it again. The big policeman scolded and swore and said he would stretch my neck to double its length—that, you know, must hurt me. O! please, sir, kind sir, won't you protect me? Won't you take me from this place? Won't you take me home?"

Startled as if at the approach of some fearful apparition, Edgar dropped the hands of the girl. *Home!* With what

strange sensations the word filled the mind of the young man! How struggled his soul to beat back into the dark, dead past from whence some subtle influence seemed to beckon, from whence some whispered voice seemed to call, from whence a shadow, dim, fleeting, seemed to issue! Momentary, instantaneous reflections upon the horizon of the subconscious mind of the young man, but with their passing only to deepen the obscurity from whence they had come, only to render more unaccountable the condition of his present surroundings.

"Where is your home?" he asked when he again was able to control his words.

"Maybe you would not call it a home," the girl answered. "When the big policeman came to take me away he called it a dog house; but to me it is home, for when the long and weary days are over at the factory it is the only place I have to go. You come to it down a narrow alley at the back of the big cotton mills. It is home to me, the only place I have to go. O, please, sir, can't you, won't you take me there? Can't you, won't you take me back to my poor Aunt Jane?"

"You have an aunt?" said Edgar, after a pause in which he could not trust himself to words.

"Yes, sir. Auntie is sick and blind and must be wanting me now. O please, kind sir, won't you take me to her?"

"And do you nurse—take care of—provide for your aunt?" asked Edgar.

Tears filled the girl's wistful eyes, and her speech was impeded by the rising sobs she could no longer repress, as she answered. "Auntie has been blind a long, long time, so long I have forgotten. She used to go to the mills to work, but she cannot go now. Ever since the white swelling came into her ankles she has not been able to walk. Now she must stay in bed all the time. O, please, kind sir, won't you, can't you?"

"Your father?" Edward interrupted.

"Dead, dead, dead," echoed the girl.

"Your mother?" he led on.

"She too is dead. All are dead except Aunt Jane and me, and when we are dead auntie says it will be the greatest blessing of our lives, and I sometimes feel so too when I am tired and cold and hungry. She must be hungry now, for they took me away before she had her bread. O, please, kind sir, won't you, can't you take me to her? Won't you, can't you—"

The tramp of heavy feet without silenced the girl. A moment the two waited, listened in painful, breathless silence. The steps were approaching nearer, nearer, closer, closer, louder, louder.

"O, now they are coming, coming for me," whispered the girl. "They will lock me in a dungeon. They will scold and curse me. They will beat me with their big sticks. They will stretch my neck. O, please, kind sir, can't you, won't you help me? Can't you, won't you take me home?"

"Your name?" Edgar asked, taking again the hands of the frightened girl in his own. "You have not told me your name."

"Effie," she answered; "Effie Harris. At the factory I am called the elf. The big boys in the streets call me the skinny elf of the cotton mill alley, but my name is Effie, Effie Harris. O, please, kind sir, can't you, won't you?"

She was hushed by the opening door.

CHAPTER IX

ADJUDGED A CRIMINAL OF THE UNUSUAL TYPE

"HERE, this way," said Officer Raegan, taking Edgar by the arm, and without further ado the patrolman conducted his captive to another part of the building, this time to a large chamber, clean, well-lighted, and in all other appointments, to those conversant in such matters, revealing the proofs of its official nature. "Gentlemen, the prisoner," officially announced Officer Raegan, having duly placed Edgar in the seat of the accused.

"With what is he charged?" asked the sergeant clerk, unable or else little caring to conceal the surprise he experienced in a cursory survey of the prisoner. "With obstructing the walk, disregard for authority, and, as all may plainly see, a character of suspicious appearance," answered Officer Raegan. These accusations properly recorded, the sergeant clerk indulged himself in a more extended inspection of the prisoner. At a glance there was seen that in the young man which easily marked him not of the class of the usual frequenters of the place, something in his person and general demeanor that set him apart, something at once perceived as not belonging to the ordinary, something by no means the usual. But to define that something, to reduce it to a certain feature or characteristic, to ascribe to it a definite look or expression was clearly beyond the accomplishments of the sergeant clerk. "What name, address, and occupation?" he inquired, returning to his blotter. "Aye! Aye! In that his contempt for our authority," said Officer Raegan, regarding his latest captive with growing interest now that in the improved light he could better inspect him. "He positively refused to reveal either his name, address, or occupation, a circumstance, gentlemen, always to stimulate the suspicions and in this particular instance to result

in his detention, for had it been otherwise I should have let him go free. Aye! aye! In that his contempt," repeated Officer Raegan, eying anew his captive. "In the matter of name and address and occupation, so please you, sirs, we are yet to supply the information." With which lengthy communication all of the energies of the old officer were again bent upon an inspection of the young man.

"Come, come," said the sergeant clerk, descending from the height of his official stool and walking close over to where Edgar was stationed, "a mere matter of record, and if innocent or rightly accused to persist in refusing this information is but to prejudice authority against you. Honorable men of honest intentions can have no valid reasons to conceal either their name, their home, or in what manner their time is employed. A mere matter of record, young man, and to persist in withholding such information, as the officer has already remarked, is in itself a reason to warrant suspicion. To speak openly, frankly, is to speak in your own favor."

"But such intelligence I cannot give you," said Edgar.

"Have you, then," asked the sergeant clerk, "nothing to say in your own behalf? No word of explanation?"

"No, nothing," the prisoner answered.

"Ugh!" grunted Officer Raegan. "Nothing to say. An artful malefactor that has learned the lesson to hold his tongue, a silent crook, a crafty won't-talk. But we will have it out of him, every bit of it. Call a detective. Ugh! ugh! a silent crook. A crafty won't-talk. Call a detective. He will find some means to induce the white-haired mute to yield up his secrets. Eh! eh! A detective. Gentlemen, it's a case for the detective."

The sergeant clerk picked up his phone. "Private exchange, fourth floor, No. 8. The detective's office. Mr. Eoff. Yes. Sergeant Jones. In the offices below, first floor. A young man of questionable appearance. Yes. Unusually so. No, no. Apprehended in the streets.

Apparently of the better class. Refuses to give his name. Yes, yes. His appearance, his demeanor leave little to doubt. Yes, thank you."

"Eh! eh! we will have it out of him now. Every bit of it," said Officer Raegan, as Mr. Eoff entered the room. But in his first survey of the prisoner there was less assurance on the brow of the detective. Thoroughly schooled in the art until in truth a master, if in such matters the mastery falls within the scope of human attainments, at once Mr. Eoff recognized in the young man that which to his skilled powers of observation was very far from the ordinary. Plainly, to use a favorite phrase of the celebrated detective, the prisoner was not right. This was clearly in evidence, unmistakably seen, something not common to the general run of miscreants. But to assign to that something any definite meaning as yet, Mr. Eoff was much in doubt. With a deference in his tone not usual to his frigid and straightforward way he began: "Young man, it is imperative that you give us your name; render some account of your recent whereabouts; explain your present situation by the mention of the incidents leading up to it; supply us with some information bearing upon your past life; your presence here in the city; your home. If this is not your home, what brought you here, where you spent yesterday, the previous day, anything that we may ascertain something of you and whether or not you are rightfully detained." The detective waited a moment, noting with his wonderful capacity for detail all the varying and varied change in the prisoner's countenance. "Have you," he added, "no information of whatever nature to render in your own interest?"

"No, none," Edgar answered, and with the answer was a look in the character of which the detective knew that the reply was final, but a look in all other respects of unsatisfactory significance, a look evidently of some deeper meaning, but the more Mr. Eoff contemplated upon its

probable nature the more of doubt and uncertainty arose in his mind. "By his own choice," said the detective, "he leaves us without an alternative. We cannot, dare not hold in disregard the charges registered against him. He himself by the manner of his own conduct admits them in part, and whatever else in due season he may be able to refute, the charge of contempt for authority has nothing to hazard its vindication. In view of which circumstance if still he persists in his silence our one remaining course of procedure is to see what information may be had in an examination of his person."

"Search him, search him, search the white-haired mute," exclaimed Officer Raegan.

"Your coat," said the detective, facing the prisoner, from whom he had turned a moment to speak a few words apart with one of the officers.

Edgar removed his coat and handed it to the detective.

"Complies readily and willingly," thought Mr. Eoff, studying anew the change of expression in the young man's face and seeing in it, as he believed, that which he had not seen before—was it the expression of guilt concealed in a masterly cunningness? or was it the open, candid look of injured innocence? Which, which? As yet he was unable to decide. "Lower right outside pocket," Mr. Eoff called, proceeding with the search, the sergeant clerk duly entering the same in the official register. "One linen handkerchief, unsoiled, neatly folded, E. B. in one corner. Elsewise unmentionable."

"Handkerchief, not soiled, folded, E. B. in corner," grunted Officer Raegan.

"Upper right inside," continued the detective. "One pencil, indelible, approximately three inches in length, unpointed, won't write in present condition. Lower left inside, empty. Upper left outside, pearl-handled nail cleaner, rusty in its metal portion. Upper right inside, nothing. Coat, dark grey, single-breasted sack, not much worn, no manufacturer's trade mark. Absence of spots,

stains, cuts, tears, but soiled in the back as if the wearer had recently been down on the ground, sleeves moist, especially the lining, to a distance above the elbows, a point, Mr. Clerk, to receive the needed emphasis."

"Eh! eh! Moist sleeves, a fact, a point, a feature, a circumstance to receive the needed emphasis," snorted Officer Raegan.

"Your vest," said Mr. Eoff.

Edgar passed his vest to the detective.

"Lower outside right, one small knife, four blades, one a file, broken at the end, and one for more than half its length covered with a dark stain, the appearance of blood."

"Eh! eh! Blood! blood! Eh! eh! Blood! blood! Eh! eh! Gentlemen, bl--d," choked Officer Raegan.

"Upper outside right." The detective removed a paper, unfolded and read: "*In this that which I hope to tell you, but in case time should forbid, or that in the excitement of the thing accomplished you should forget. Stop not until your escape is assured. No time should be lost. I am suspected and had best remain here until in my departure their suspicions will not be strengthened. Our only hope is in your rapid flight. Go! Go! Signed, nothing.*" This in a delicate and well-written feminine hand," added the detective, contemplating the prisoner now, not in the class of the probable or likely, but of a certainly to brook no further doubt. "Inside right," Mr. Eoff called, continuing the search. "A well-filled purse—fives, tens, twenties." "Eh! eh! Fives, tens, twenties! Eh! eh!" blubbered Officer Raegan.

"Trousers," deliberately led on the detective. After that part of his wearing apparel had been scrupulously examined, "Moist throughout and presenting a short cut in the left leg near the mid point from hip to knee. Pocket, contents not mentionable."

The examination of the clothing properly completed and the findings as carefully recorded, attention was now directed to the physical man. "Hair, heavy, white,

unusually so for one of his apparent age." Mr. Eoff clipped a lock and set to it an ignited match. "Burns with an absence of any odor of paint or dye, a premature whiteness. Eyes, brown, of the open frank expression, but singular in the presence of a constantly issuing gleam. Nose, symmetrical, straight with normal bridge. Teeth, complete set, evenly opposed, no dentistry. Fresh wound on the right cheek. Large irregular shaped scar below the left collar bone, the appearance of a burn. Small scar on left foot extending onto the great toe. No other body marks. Height, five feet seven inches. Weight, one hundred forty-four pounds." The finger prints and the physical examination was complete. "Take him to a cell," ordered the detective. "Eh! eh! A cell! a cell," cried Officer Raegan.

The eyes of Mr. Eoff followed the prisoner as an officer conducted him from the room. "In demeanor a riddle," he said, "in mien a genuine enigma, but with it unquestionably a criminal of the first type. Robbery and murder committed under the eye could have little better in the way of positive proof. Money in quantities to warrant an explanation of its immediate source and the purpose it was meant to serve. On his person fresh wounds that bespeak a recent encounter. Wet trousers and sleeves in which we see the manner of the victim's disposition, carried into the water and lowered with his own hands. If put to the test, incrimination could scarce array itself in a garb more convincing. What more could be desired in the way of substantiation? The proof in itself is complete. You, gentlemen, are in the unique position of having apprehended the perpetrator in advance of the announcement of the crime, but that will be speedily forthcoming. He is not a criminal of the petty class, but one of those of rare intellectual qualities turned into the ways of crime. In his detention neglect no means of safety; you may count upon his wits to see and profit by an opportunity, the slightest. Leave nothing."

"I shall order a special guard for his cell," interrupted the sergeant clerk.

"Until further development a wise precaution," approved the scrupulous Mr. Eoff.

Thus assured of the safe-keeping of the prisoner, than whom in many respects one of more interest had never fallen into his hands, the detective repaired to his own office. "Hardly likely," he said to himself, as he referred to the records, a long list of which was ever ready for his inspection. What! scars of a like nature and similarly located! Could it be possible that the interesting prisoner was the lunatic bank defaulter?

CHAPTER X

THE MINISTER'S SELF-ACCUSATION

PASSING beyond the Asylum grounds, which the good minister traversed quickly, there were a number of ways by which he might return to the city, the auto line, the street car, a footpath leading in a circuitous course and for a part of its way through a deep forest. The good minister unhesitatingly chose the last. He wanted to get away from everybody. He wanted to be alone. He wanted to think. He wanted to ask himself a number of questions. He wanted to commune with God about it. He wanted to fall down upon his knees and pray to Heaven as he had never prayed before. He had the feeling that something had been taken from him. He wanted the peace of mind of a few hours ago.

As he walked along the awful condition of his friend and the other Asylum inmates came into his thoughts. He repeated: "You speak with the tongue of a minister, but your life, your deeds are of another order. Your aim, no doubt, was heaven, but, missing it, you, like me, have come to the wrong place, for this is hell." He thought it now more strange than when he heard his friend uttering it in the machine-like way. He wondered if he was repeating it still, if he had repeated it a hundred times, if he would stop, exhausted, at a thousand times; or if he stopped short of exhaustion, what would stop him. He tried to think in what way his presence could have stimulated such thoughts. It puzzled him. He could not make it out. He thought how inexpressibly terrible it must be for one to believe himself in hell. It brought hell closer to him, invested it with horrors hitherto unthought of. A dread sense of self-accusation seemed to be moving along with him. Everything within his view accentuated it. The fading foliage of the trees, the browning grass diver-

sified with wild flowers holding yet a few scattered blossoms, the small islands in the river near to which the path conducted him, the bed of rushes with their deep conjuring ague, the distant voices in boats borne musically toward him on the ripple of the water were all expressive of it. In the graceful leap of a sportful or hungry trout seen by chance, in the careless dip of an oar for pleasure or the consumption of time, in the rapid bark of an industrious dog, in the low of a cow anxious for the meadow or the calf from which she had been driven, in the frightened scorpion mad in his urgent search for a safe retreat where there is no danger, in the dull-skinned lizard playing at his single-handed game of ups and downs on the reclining trunk of a near-by tree, in all such sights and sounds he could see and feel it. It encompassed him in every scent that emanated from his wooded surroundings and that fraught the early autumn air with their sweetened fragrance. He could see it reflected in the bright blue dome of the heavens and in the glorious track of the ascending sun. It was everywhere and in everything until at length he stopped to marvel at its presence, but to suffer more and more as it sank deeper and deeper into his soul.

The finer sensibilities of his nature, nourished by the choice pabulum of the immaterial or spiritual, had been contaminated with the grosser elements of the material or physical; and its corroding poison was disseminating itself to every part of his being, but as yet he did not see in this the source of his self-accusation.

"O God, wherefore its origin?" he exclaimed; "why to me proclaimed in everything I see? Even Nature, dumb Nature, is outspoken in her voice of derision." And kneeling there the good minister prayed to Heaven as men seldom in this world pray.

In part relieved, he arose to his feet. A wild grapevine full of grapes was near him. He unthoughtedly plucked a cluster and placed one of them in his mouth. The fruit,

not yet ripe, was sour to his sense of taste. "My God!" he exclaimed. It turned his thoughts again to the physical. It reminded him of what the doctor had said. He tasted the grapes again. In that the doctor was right. He knew he could not change it before he tried, but he wanted to try. How foolish, he thought, and yet it troubled him. No, he could not control it. He could not change it. To that extent, the physical in his make-up was supreme, in that Nature had denied him the right of choice. That was determined and made permanent when he was made. Sweet is sweet, and bitter is bitter, and by the most urgent desire he could not make it the contrary.

It took hold of him with a new force. He had the feeling that he had been directed there and that the grapes had grown in that particular place that this might be demonstrated to him. The forces of his nature, the activity of which had caused the self-accusation of a few moments ago, were stimulated anew.

"Can it really be that the more exalted functions of the human mind are dependent upon the physical with its predetermined laws, and that the immaterial or spiritual in his nature is of negligible proportions? Can it really be that in the character, the quality of his convictions, his beliefs, his very conception of good and evil, of right and wrong, the physical is the deciding agency and that the decision is innate in character? I know what is right," he said. "I know what is wrong, in that I am guided by my conscience. But what is my conscience? Of what does it consist? Is it material or is it immaterial? Can I control it, or is it automatic, self-determining in the nature of its guidance? Ah, I fear it is innate in its action. I see it in another light. Add sugar to the grape, and you change it. Add information, facts, truths to the knowledge of men, and their opinions, their beliefs may change, but such a change comes from without. Such a change does not mean that a new state of affairs has been brought about in the intellectual centers. They still act and in-

terpret in the same way. It is the thing under consideration that has been changed. It is the grape that has been changed and not the function that determines the taste of the grape."

The good minister was beginning to see and accept the powers of the physical. He was passing from the ideal to the real, from pleasing fancies to painful facts, and the immaterial of his past life was fading rapidly into nothingness. Humanity for the first time in his life he was about to see as humanity is.

"I fear that it is all fixed at the creation of the individual," he further reasoned, "that it is inborn, that in us the physical is supreme and the immaterial has its existence only in our thoughts. If it is true (and it looks true), the question of our beliefs, if we have used our discriminating powers as best we could, is of minor importance, and for such beliefs, regardless of what they may be, we cannot be justly condemned. God is just, and God will not do it. It is not how much we believe, how little we believe, or what we believe, but are we sincere in it and have we used our opportunities?"

The conclusion was very far from an agreeable one to the good minister's mind. In it his views of life were changed entirely, not by preference, not by choice. It was not his wish. It made him unhappy. It destroyed his highest ideals. It narrowed his sphere of action. It set a limit beyond which he could not go. He resisted it with all of his powers. Nothing could have made him as happy as not to believe it, but the sugar had been added to the grapes. He would have still had it sour, but he could not. It was the extrinsic, over which the individual in some instances may have the power of control, operating upon the intrinsic, over which he has little or perhaps no direct control.

"I can no longer question it," the good minister thought. "My convictions are changed and by extrinsic agencies. The doctor is right. We cannot control it. God knows it

is a great disappointment to me. God knows I would have it otherwise."

All this time the good minister had been standing, the bunch of grapes still in his hand. He let them fall to the ground, then picked them up immediately. They suggested another thought. He carefully, almost tenderly, sorted out a number of the shrunken, shriveled, and blighted ones. "The parallel of disease," he thought, "how terrible in its effects, the arrest of development, deformity, distortion, the lack of natural symmetry, beauty marred. He tasted it, flavor destroyed, not of the same species, no longer recognized in that way, completely changed. He broke it open—decay, destruction, abnormality to the core. He started to say in it God had some purpose, but he did not say it. He shook his head. "No, no, it is not God; it is faulty development; it is accident; it is chance; it is in the environ; it is not sin; it is the failure of material growth and development."

The good minister's attention was here attracted by a noise on the river. It was a boat trying to effect a landing. The water was high, thick, muddy with the contents of many smaller streams poured into it for hundreds of miles along its course. A boat on the river was not an unusual thing. One might be seen almost at any time, but the good minister stood watching it. He was wondering why they wanted to land at that place, the regular landing being some miles farther down the river. At length the bank was reached and the ropes made secure. "Something wrong," the good minister thought, "a leak, or the machinery. No, some passengers to land." A group of half a dozen or more near the stern of the boat was making ready to come ashore. One of them walked to the forward end of the deck, where the captain, a small man with large glasses, was busying himself in the final orders. They talked together a moment, the captain pointing in the direction of the Asylum. "Some distant visitors to see an inmate, friends or relatives, God pity them!"

"Now to the landing," the captain called. The group moved forward—all but two, who seemed to hesitate, or something else hindered. The good minister could see that one of them was a young man, not yet twenty-five he guessed, the other much older, fifty or more. Perhaps they were friends, perhaps father and son, perhaps business associates; no, enemies, for when the elder laid hold of the younger an energetic scuffle quickly ensued and as quickly ended by the elder having been hurled violently to the deck and given half a score of heavy kicks before others of the party could come to his aid.

"At it again, is he?" said Mr. Jarrud, hurrying to the assistance, but hesitating to take hold of the insane man, for such he was. On their long trip down the river his aid had often been necessary, but the swollen and painful eye he received the previous day rendered him now less eager in its profference.

"He is always at something," said the elder, regaining his feet. "It is no use to parley with him. He will move when he sees he has to move, and not one minute sooner. Come on, everybody, he's a man."

The scene filled the good minister with sorrow. It was more than he cared to witness further. Already he had seen too much for one day. He turned to walk on, but his steps were checked by wild cries from the boat and a loud splash in the water. From his position he could not see the surface of the river. He rushed up closer. He saw the insane man struggling in the water, his head now above, now beneath its muddy rolls, but making his way toward the bank. The people on the boat showed no inclination to go to his assistance. At length the insane man reached the shore and with much pulling and slipping and struggling lifted himself from the water. His physical strength must have been exhausted. He stretched his body at full length on the cold, wet earth near the water's edge and for a time seemed to rest comfortably.

The members of his party left the boat. They were

planning together as to how best to again lay hold of him. "No, no, not that way," the elder said. "He will jump into the water again. Some other way must be found. We must get him a safe distance from the river."

"Then into the water let him go; he seems to be able to get out," Mr. Jarrud observed. "But that is not recapturing him," the elder replied. "I am on to his trick and know what he will do. He has done it one time, and he will do it a hundred times if doing it enables him to have his own way."

"Yes, or a thousand times," thought the good minister, whose position was close enough to overhear their words.

The captain of the boat came ashore. "What next, gentlemen?" he said as he joined the group. "I must be off not later than noon. The time is close. What's the next move?"

"Not upon him," Mr. Jarrud answered, "until he takes it into his head to move farther from the river."

"Right you are," sanctioned the captain. "It wouldn't be safe—" "Sh, sh, whispered the elder. "He is moving, he is getting up; don't speak; don't let him see we are watching him." Once upon his feet, it was easy to see that the attention of the insane man was fixed on the wet and soiled condition of his garments. After inspecting them carefully, he began to remove them from his person.

"He will strip to the skin," whispered the elder, who was eying him furtively. "He will not leave a thread. We must do something."

The good minister could not stand idly by any longer. "May I offer my assistance?" he asked as he joined the group. "We are in need of assistance, stranger," the elder said, "but in what way do you propose to do it?"

"By offering him dry clothes," the good minister answered. "He is wet and cold."

"A timely suggestion," they all agreed. Forthwith dry clothes were brought from the boat and, armed with no other weapon, the good minister walked straight to the

denuded man, for, as the elder had correctly prophesied, by this time he had divested himself of the last garment.

"Some dry clothes, my friend," he said, presenting the garments. "Thank you," was the insane man's unexpected reply, taking the garments and beginning to dress himself. The good minister watched him in silence. In no presence had he ever stood with feelings quite so helpless. His thoughts went back to the Asylum to the dear friend he had visited that morning and to how the doctor said his presence had started his mind in a certain direction from which he could not free himself at his own choosing. The recollection added to his painful uncertainty. He was afraid to move or speak lest his companion might be similarly affected.

In time the toilet was complete. The insane man seemed pleased with the fresh, dry garments. "More to thy comfort," the good minister feelingly said. "Thy, thy," the insane man replied, "a form of speech often in the mouths of ministers, but your life, your deeds may be of another order."

The good minister's face turned white. Almost the very words of his demented friend at the Asylum.

"With the external comforts, how am I to know you seek not the destruction of internal comforts of far greater importance to my peace of mind? Injury sometimes wraps about its ugly form the robes of kindness. Is it the garb you wear?"

The good minister hesitated.

"Answer straight," the insane man demanded, a wild look overspreading his face. "You too may purpose to thwart me, but I can do it, I know I can do it, and I am the only man in the world that can do it. They know it, too, and that is the reason they dog me day and night. I can do it, and I will do it, and when it is done, ha! ha! when it is done!"

"Come," said the good minister, believing to have caught the drift of his delusion, "come, come, I will aid

you. I am sure you can do it if you can only get beyond their reach, and this is your chance. The woods are thick. We can reach them in a bound, and once in them we are safe from pursuit. Let us to the woods at once."

"But the villains, the villains, they will follow," the insane man urged.

"No, no, maybe not," the good minister continued. "They will not see us. We must go gently. We will not invite their attention. See, the woods are thick. We will hide till they are gone."

"Gone? gone?" sarcastically echoed the insane man. "Only a fool would believe they would go without me. They know I can do it, and they know I will do it. They don't want me to try it. They watch me all the time."

"They cannot watch you if you go with me," the good minister urged. "We will lose ourselves in the woods. It's your only chance to get out of their reach." The insane man pointed to the river. "No, no," the good minister answered. "They would follow in the boat. Not in that way. We must secret ourselves in the woods. Come, come, now they are not looking." The good minister moved forward. The insane man followed. They reached the path and turned in the direction of the Asylum.

"Done cleverly enough," said the elder, when a safe distance separated them from the river, "but we must follow them closely; it will not be safe for the kind stranger when he sees that he has been deceived."

Leading on, the good minister had not thought of the question of his own personal safety. His mind had been otherwise employed. He was wondering if the insane man in the perverted condition of his awful malady would have enough of intelligence to realize that he had been wantonly made the victim of deception. They had traversed the more wooded section and were coming into the open.

"Stop, villain!" the insane man commanded.

The good minister instantly obeyed.

"Wherefore trifle with me?" the maniac exclaimed, his eyes flashing with a mingled look of rage and wildness. "I sought not thy guidance, impostor, deceiver, liar"; and springing at the good minister with a fury intensified by the perversion of a mentality once strong and lofty, his mad blows rained upon the head and face of the good minister until, helpless and bleeding, he lay almost senseless at the insane man's feet.

CHAPTER XI

THE MINISTER GOES HOME

WITH the feeling that perhaps he could be of some further aid, the good minister, unmindful of the ugly wounds he had received at the hands of the demented man, accompanied the party to the Asylum; but immediately the inclosure was reached and the heavy gates swung behind them, with a "God forbid!" on his devout lips and an anxious look at the immense building, he turned once more in the direction of the city.

"The fate of fates, our language has no word to express it," he murmured to himself as he plunged into the path, and this time without any hesitancy as to which way he would go. Contrary to the rule, the street car was in waiting, and he knew the auto would soon return, but he preferred to reach home by the less public ways. His crumpled and torn garments, the great gaping hole in the crown of his hat, the wounds on his head and face must attract attention. He would avoid the gaze of the curious. He would escape the questions and sympathies of his friends, which in the city were numbered by the thousands.

As he penetrated deeper into the forest the thoughts of the morning began to urge themselves upon his mind. The material, tangible side of his nature was still on the assertive. He was looking for the physical, its forces, and the immutable powers resident in such forces. "Fulfilling the laws of nature or else nature defeated through some physical agency," he said to himself as he paused beneath an oak tree and reached for an acorn on a low-swung bough. "Its only fruit, and this or nothing it must produce," he pronounced aloud, "and any and all forces to the contrary acting cannot change it. It is an acorn, perfect or imperfect, or it is nothing. Governed by immutable laws, and as is the tree, its source, so it may be,

is perhaps, with man. Am I essentially, fundamentally what nature made me? or have I had a hand in the making?"

His tone was plaintive, his manly, handsome face wore an expression of sadness. He tossed the acorn away and walked on. In his path he soon came upon a bundle of papers. They had the appearance of legal documents, as suggested by some official seal, papers likely of value which should be returned to the loser. He picked them up. Admission papers to the Asylum. They had lost them. He must take them back. He looked at his watch. It was getting well into the afternoon, twenty minutes past five. It would delay him two hours, at the least, but he must do it, and back the good minister headed for the third time in that one day toward the Asylum.

Approaching the building, the wild shrieks of a desperate maniac reached his ears, indistinct at first in the distance, but louder and louder as his hurrying steps brought him nearer and nearer. He had heard on former visits to the Asylum like outbursts of seething madness, but he had not until to-day been able to appreciate its significance, especially from a causative standpoint. Hitherto associated with it in his mind was some indefinite something akin to disease, yet not disease as seen in its workings and effects in other parts of the body.

"A material mind," he murmured to himself as he mounted the steps, "aspiration, thought, sentiment, the result of the material, and a material subject to the laws, the developmental faults, the diseases common to the material in other parts of the human make-up." An answer to his ring at the door checked him. "Papers," he said to the night orderly who opened the door.

"Papers for what?" the orderly asked.

"Admission papers. I picked them up in the path. They must have lost them," the good minister explained. "Er, yes, for the fighting inmate who was brought here to-day, the worst in many a day. He even fights himself

when there is no one else to fight; the maddest of the mad; says he can do it, says he will do it, and that heaven and hell combined have not the power to thwart him. Hear him now in his mad ravings."

"He repeats it still," the good minister murmured as he descended the steps. "He will repeat it a hundred times. He will repeat it a thousand times. He must repeat it until some stronger influence comes to his aid or until exhaustion relieves him. He cannot stop it himself, neither can he divert it into other channels. A destiny of the physical in which surely God could have no purpose; a fulfillment of the laws of the material, and in its fulfillment confirmatory proof of their immutable nature."

Again regaining the path, the good minister plunged into it. "My wife," he thought before he had gone very far on his way—"she must know my whereabouts, that no serious accident has befallen me." He flew back to the Asylum. The use of a phone for one moment. "Three eight two," he called. "Yes, central. I knew you must be uneasy. I should have phoned you sooner. No, no, I am all right. Yes, at the Asylum. It may be some time yet. Don't wait for me. Yes, away from the city all day. O no, I am perfectly well, perfect—yes, yes, good-by." "No need for haste now," the good minister thought, as for the fourth time he bent his steps in a homeward direction. "Her fears are allayed. The evening is not unpleasant, the gathering darkness and the quietude of the unfrequented way may aid me in quieting my distraught thought."

How often has man looked forward to the coming of the physical night with its gathering darkness and its quietude to alleviate or relieve some unpleasant or unbearable physical or mental incumbent! and how frequently has his anticipation been realized! But in no such agencies was the good minister to find relief. Naught for his distress could the darkness bring. Grieved and disappointed at the newly conceived ideas of his mental faculties, their

limitations, their utter dependence upon the physical, their obedience to inherent laws, no influence other than one with the power to change them to comply with his former conceptions could in any way relieve him.

"My mind!" he exclaimed as he plunged deeper into the wooded path and as the oncoming darkness thickened about him. "Reason? What is it?" The tone of the godly man was stern and inquiring. "Of what does it consist? It must be either of the material or of the immaterial, for other than that there is not. If material, it is matter, or the result of matter. If immaterial, it is of the spiritual or of some of the spiritual's subtle influences. Matter or spirit." He sought a differential analysis of the two. Matter has composition; spirit lacks composition. Matter has form; spirit is without any form. Matter occupies space; spirit requires no space. Matter can be broken up into its component parts and reduced to its elemental substances; spirit has no component parts or elemental substances, in so far as human perception knows. Matter is something; spirit is noth—" He hesitated, his brows moved in a painful frown. "Yes, nothing, a mere name, the antonym of matter and nothing more."

In this differentiation the good minister was leading himself up to a declaration for the material in all things. "This a material world, man a material being, his reason, his mentality, in all its capabilities, of a material origin." It filled him full of all kinds of misgivings; all kinds of questions teemed in his soul and urged themselves upon his intelligence. He felt that he wanted to tear everything to pieces and look it through and through. He was ready to say: "If it is material, its existence cannot be questioned; it speaks for itself. If it is immaterial, it is without existence, cannot speak for itself, nor can reasonable, sane men say aught of it. For, if immaterial, is it not nothing? and how with 'nothing' is man to treat?"

The increasing difficulties of keeping to the winding course of the narrow path were beginning to urge them-

selves upon the good minister with such insistence as now to claim a part of his attention. Soon he realized where he was and what he was doing. He mended his pace, but as yet it was some miles to his home, and at the new rate he could reach it only at a late hour.

In time a weary and sad man approached the home he had left but that morning.

His expectant wife was at the door to receive him. "Here at last," she said, "and whole." How little she then knew of what the day had brought! "I was so uneasy until I heard from you. The papers are full of your day's adventures, flaring headlines: 'INSANE MAN JUMPS INTO THE RIVER AND IS RESCUED BY THE REV. CLARK, WELL-KNOWN PASTOR OF CARBON STREET CHURCH, WHO LATER NARROWLY ESCAPES DEATH AT THE HANDS OF THE FURIOUS MANIAC.' Merciful heaven! What frightful wounds! We must have a surgeon!" She seized the telephone.

"No, no, my dear," protested the good minister. "My physical hurts are of a minor nature, insignificant in themselves, mere trifles to harm no one. A little water to remove the blood."

The alarmed wife put down the telephone, brought the water, and bathed his face. The blood removed, the wounds were much less frightful in appearance. "Why," she said, "they are not so bad, but you do not look at ease. Your countenance bespeaks some trouble. I fear there are other injuries, deeper seated, a shock it may be to your brain. I never saw you look so strange. We had better summon the surgeon. There is, there must be some hurt somewhere that we do not understand."

And, indeed, there was some hurt somewhere, a hurt, too, that was difficult to understand, but it was not one of a physical nature. It did not consist of bruised and torn and bleeding flesh, crushed and commuted and broken bones; not of the injuries amenable to the mechanical accuracies

and germicidal remedies of the skilled surgeon; not wounds of the material man of which the good minister was so full a few hours ago and for which he so boldly declared to the total disregard of everything not of the physical; but wounds of the mental man, wounds of the immaterial or spiritual man, wounds of a type for which there is no healing potion or alleviating unction in the apothecary shops of this material world of material things; wounds of a character wholly immune to the numberless hordes of invisible and poison microbes that infest, feed, and fatten on the death, decay, and corruption of their own production in the infected flesh of the physical man. But, withal, wounds highly susceptible to the more destructive and death-dealing contamination of a disbelief that might mean eternal pollution and contagion to the invisible and immaterial make-up of the spiritual man. For of these matters who is it with the knowledge to speak unerringly?

Mrs. Clark fully realized that there was something radically wrong with her husband. In his every act, word, expression she could see it reflected; and that it was due to his physical hurts she now had no doubts. But to all of her insistence for the aid of a surgeon the good minister lent only an ear of refusal.

With most of us few things are so easy as denial of all ideas not agreeable to our wishes. We dismiss them as intolerable for that reason alone, not bothering to give them a second thought. The convictions and beliefs to which we adhere represent, in the main, that which is most pleasing to our nature; a kind of passive arrival at an agreeable conclusion, because it is agreeable, without the expenditure of any special effort to get at its real merits; a sort of wholesale acceptance of the pleasing, simply because it is pleasing, or a wholesale rejection of the unwholesome because it is unwholesome.

This, however, was not true of the Rev. Clark. He was a thoughtful man, but, with rare exceptions, his thought dealt in the abstract. His mind more of a store-

house or receptacle for knowledge than a laboratory wherein knowledge in the proof of its quality is reduced to an elemental basis. Until recently he had never associated the intelligent side of his nature with the material. Heretofore it had been his custom to think of the intellectual or spiritual man as distinct, separate, apart from the physical man, the one wanting in flesh, the other of the flesh, as was his favorite expression; man a dual entity, man physical, man not of the physical, and many were the interesting sermons he had preached on the subject. But, alas! he could never think of it again in that way. His immaterial man had vanished in his new conceptions of the relationship of mind to matter or the mental to the physical. The two had merged into one, and in the one he now saw the two with a convincing precision, a painful distinctness.

"I, a student of human nature," he reasoned with himself as alone he sat in his study, where he had gone as soon as his wounds were bathed and his soiled garments replaced by fresh ones. "I, a judge of the acts and lives of men, their hopes, desires, passions, emotions, sentiments." His tone grew scornfully severe, and he involuntarily rose to his feet. "Yes, I thought I knew something of their nature. I was not insincere, but O how utterly unmindful have I been of the fundamental principles upon which these things must be determined. If I am to know and judge fairly of men, their natures, lives, motives, acts, I must ascertain first their physical condition. If the determining thoughts, the controlling passions of one human being are to be rightly understood, such understanding must be preceded by a proper knowledge of the state of the mental forces in which the thoughts and passions had their origin. If I am to intelligently place the stamp of approval or disapproval upon any human deed, I can do it only when the condition of the brain in which the deed had its inception is thoroughly understood. If I am to rightly interpret the hopes, desires, wishes of men,

how is it possible for me to do so until I know the fountain head from which they come? If I am to preach even a reasonable code of morals," the good minister went on, "they must be founded on man's innate nature, since any other foundation would not be reasonable. And how am I to know that innate nature if I do not know the condition of the brain in which it resides?"

The good man's gaze was grave and thoughtful. He slowly walked up and down his room. "Yes, yes," he reflected, "it is a question of the physical, the immaterial and spiritual not to be considered. The brain gone, the mind is gone—reason, conception, conscience, moral sense, all gone. Apart from the physical man there is no mind. It is the work of the physical brain and, therefore, of material origin."

He stopped, looked at his hands, moved his fingers back and forth, closed them tightly in the palms, extended them to their full length, placed them in various positions, ran them gently, lightly, the finger tips one over the other. "Motion, sensation, where, how, in the fingers? No. In the brain? Yes. Other than the brain there is no motion. Other than the brain there is no sensation. Natural tendencies," he exclaimed, "inherent characteristics; to ignore them is to ignore the God who gave them existence. Ah! to what end does it lead? Man by nature inclined to sin. Of such were my previous contentions. How ridiculously absurd! It cannot be true. Man has no such inborn inclinations. Existence did not come to him by choice; he was forced into being. God made him; and if sin is a part of his innate nature, God made him sinful. The fruit partakes of the tree. It is the law. If the flower, by nature, is sweet, there is the same nature in the cruelty of the thorn. If man, by nature, is sinful, only abnormal man could be the contrary."

He moved to the door, stood for a moment with his hand on the latch; then as if the thought and act were one, he turned to a table and picked up his Bible. Psalm 22,

verse 24: "For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, neither hath he hid his face from him, but when he cried unto him he heard." "It means disease," the good minister went on. "God knew the sick were to be among us, an inflamed eye, a painful bunion, a swollen and stiff rheumatic joint, everyday occurrences that scarcely invite our notice. But a disabled and diseased brain, how shocking to think of! How staggering to our senses! How stunning to our perceptions! But why not? Yes, why not?" he repeated, holding to each word as if uncertain of its meaning. "Other parts of our body become a prey to disease; other parts of the physical man are disabled in part or completely by its baneful effects, then why not the brain, which is equally material in its make-up?"

The hour was late, close on to midnight. Mrs. Clark at frequent intervals had stolen near his study to be assured he was all right. For the good minister to pursue his studies at length, often well into the morning hours, was not at all unusual, but Mrs. Clark felt a sense of uneasiness and could not sleep. "Still thinking aloud," she said to herself, as she approached his door.

"A disabled and diseased brain! How shocking to think of! How staggering to our senses!"

She could hear him distinctly. "How strange!" she thought as she bent closer to the door. Familiar with his sermons and his usual line of thought, often his audience when special preparations were being made, she had never heard him talk that way. The blows had affected his mind. It could not have any other meaning. She could not stand it any longer. She opened the door and rushed to his side. "We must have a surgeon," she said. "The blows have affected your brain. Your looks, your words, your acts show it. You are not yourself. There must be some serious hurt."

"Peace to thy fears," the good minister answered, returning the Bible which he still held in his hand to the

table and beckoning his wife to a seat. "It is true, I have received a painful, in many respects a mortal injury."

"Then forthwith the surgeon," interrupted his wife, springing to her feet.

"The surgeon?" echoed the godly man, beckoning again the alarmed wife to her seat. "He can bring no relief. His is the gaping wound of the flesh, the torn and bleeding vessel, some organic dissolution. My hurt is functional, the kind not improved by stick and plaster. These material wounds you see are trivial, will heal in a fortnight, and be assured there are no other deeper seated of any consequence. The change you see in me is not the result of physical blows. Would to God it were! Then time would heal it. No, my wounds are of a different cast. Until to-day I was to myself an utter stranger, living, thinking in a sphere totally removed from that in which my life by nature was cast. See me, wife!" the good minister exclaimed, "my form, my features, the different parts of my physical make-up, are they not as nature intended, and do they not that same intention serve? In the shape, the size of my bones, did I have the privilege of a choice? My hair, my eyes? Was I allowed an expression of preference in their color? Are they not as nature made them; and unsatisfactory the making, can I change it? Was it not appointed that my heart should pump blood? When or how it began I do not know. Neither have I knowledge of when or how it will end. It does its work when I am conscious; it does its work when I am unconscious. Asleep or awake, night or day, it makes no difference, for pump it will, and pump it does. You see, it was made to pump. And what's more, I cannot control it. Nor with this do we see the end of nature's inexorable rule as applied to the animate clay of which bodily man consists," the good minister went on. "Every part of his being is subject to the same innate influences, his brain or mind, contrary to the general belief, proving no exception, created to perform a certain function, set to

work and controlled by fixed and preëstablished laws, simply a bodily organ like any other part of the human structure and doing its work in obedience to nature's intent. Still, he is supposed to be master of its action. He is supposed, through the agency of the will, to have the manner of its mental response under control, a false and ignorant supposition. He may set it to work, or, if at work, restrain or divert its action, to an extent, but of the intellectual response that comes as the result of such work, the will is not the determining factor. In the matter of our desires, our wishes, even our conceptions of right and wrong, I fear we have not the privilege of a choice. We must think, we must believe in compliance with a material source of intelligence, we must—"

"But you forget the spiritual or immaterial," his wife suggested. "It to no laws is obedient."

"The very source of my trouble," quickly rejoined the good minister. "There is no immaterial or spiritual in the sense that it is separate and distinct from the physical man."

"Our hopes, our longings, all the finer sensibilities of our nature, are they not of the immaterial?" inquired the wife.

"True, in themselves not of physical proportions, but of a material origin," answered the good minister; "and hence, subject to the laws, the immutable laws and the imperfections of the physical, man cannot get away from his material self, neither can he fundamentally change it."

"But let us have man as God made him," said the anxious wife.

"Aye, indeed, leave man as God made him, and so we must," exclaimed the minister. "To seek to do otherwise is but to express one's disregard for the laws of nature. Made, created, fashioned that way, who should purpose to thwart the very basal principles of life itself? The mind of man, his source of knowledge, consciousness, all of the mental functions, from the most ignoble to those of a purity and loftiness that should mark the thoughts of an

angel, have for their only source the material cells of a material brain, and cells, too, we should ever bear in mind, not in obedience in their innate function to the so designated forces of the will. Our beliefs in their action must reside; our conviction in their material life must dwell; in them we have knowledge, understanding, reason, judgment, but over their action we are without the power of control. They choose for us. We cannot choose for them. How truly wonderful in their predestined nature! How terribly significant in the truer relationship of man to man and man to God!"

In like manner the good minister talked the night away; and when the morning was come he was talking still, and still the wife was listening. Never was introspection more searchingly made with the same amount of knowledge. Never did the mind of man more earnestly call to question the powers, possibilities, limitations, control, and composition of itself. Never did thought say to thought in more candid inquiry: "Wherefore your presence? Of what do you consist? What is your composition? Of what are you made? Unfold yourself, that I may peep into the mysteries of which you are replete. Make bare the laboratories wherein are distilled the exhilarating draughts of pleasure, enjoyment, gratification, cheerfulness, gaiety. Show me the crude product from which come love, affection, compassion, sympathy, and how brought to the different stages of development. Open wide the black vats of hate, enmity, animosity, that I may see and understand and know the fountainhead from which they come." Never did reason contend with reason in sincerity more pure for admittance into the secret and silent chambers of its habitation. Never did judgment so ardently call upon judgment to yield up the fundamental principles in the possession of which the right to judge resides and without which to exercise that right is to usurp it. Never did imagination so fervently implore imagination to know the elemental substance from which

multiplied millions of compounds come into conscious, though immaterial, existence, their airy and invisible ingredients to intoxicate with the nectar of a pleasure brewed from the fragrance of an existenceless flower grown and matured in the ethereal gardens of nihilism. Never did mind say to mind in more contrite spirit: "Who is your master? Who sets you to work? Who directs and controls your action? Who says, 'Believe this, believe that, believe the other'? Who says, 'This is good, this is bad, this is right, this is wrong'? Who says, 'go on, go on'? Who says, 'Stop, stop, enough, enough'? God? No, it is not God. If God it was, then thought at all times must be pure and perfect. If God it was, then the individual would have no responsibilities his own. It is not God. Whence, then, the directing power?"

In the look the good minister here bent upon his wife was an appeal as if she might assist him.

"The control is in the mind itself," he continued, "one part of a superior nature directing another of a subordinate degree, one cell group of a higher order regulating a group of an order inferior, but whencesoever the control of the group, the highest, who or what sets them to work? Who tells them what to do? Who tells them what not to do? Is it determined in the cell itself, or is it determined outside of the cell? If determined in the cell, how? If determined outside the cell, how? Who made the laws that govern the action and life of the cell? Who put thought into it, and what kind of thought? Who put reason into it, and what kind of reason? Who put judgment into it, and what kind of judgment? Who put the knowledge of right and wrong into it, and how were the standards determined? Who put love, reverence, hate, enmity into it, and were or were not their qualities of a predestined nature? The answer must be found in the nature and life of the cell itself. It is unquestionably so, and the Doctor is right. The choice, the quality is not within the forces of the

will. We may use, but fundamentally we may not choose. Nature set the limit in an inviolate law. "We may—"

"Why question?" the wife interposed, fearful to interrupt, but alarmed more at the significance of his words than the painful intensity in which he uttered them. "Why endeavor to pick the mind into tiny bits and weigh each fragment in the scales so delicately poised? May we not in better wisdom leave that to the care of the God who made us?"

For a moment the handsome face of the good minister lost its expression of painful intensity. "Leave it to God?" he repeated. "To many questions, my answer of yesterday, but not of to-day nor henceforward."

Nervously he walked up and down the room, again the look of painful intensity on his handsome face. "Leave it to God? A byway to avoid many difficult, unpleasant questions, an insult, in many instances, to truth and justice. Leave it to God? We may leave it to God only to the extent that God is existent in the innate nature of the life in question. It is not God in the life that is supreme, but the inborn principles without which the life could not be."

"Even so," assented the wife, purposing more to divert the headlong train of thought into which the minister had so suddenly fallen than to voice an approval of such strange ideas. "Be it God or be it nature, wherefore a difference of essential proportions? What to me or what to you can it mean?"

"Aye, indeed, what to you, what to me the meaning?" echoed the good minister. His tone was now more contemplative. He ceased the restless strides to face his wife. "The meaning? *The meaning?*" he repeated. "To me it means that my former notions of life must be abandoned; it means that I must seek new standards for truth and right and justice; it means that I see and know humanity in a light hitherto unseen, unknown; it means that the individual must have new rights, new liberties; it means

that man is a law unto himself and that, if he is to comply with other laws, so-called, they must first conform to the laws of his own existence; it means that justice, punishment must be fashioned solely to the individual and not the individual to them; it means that man is a created being and not the little god he often thinks himself to be; it means my ministry, my life from this day, this moment, is to be given to facts, to things as they are and not as, by choice, I would prefer them to be; it means that the innate nature of the individual is first, and that the God or whatever else gave him that nature is a consideration secondary in importance; it means—"

"But with all these meanings," interrupted the alarmed wife, "why, why?"

"Yes, why? why? Might not you, might not I, might not the reformatory, the jail, the jury, the prosecutor, the judge, ask why? why?"

CHAPTER XII

DR. RUFF VISITS INMATE

THOUGH he had spared neither time nor effort in his purpose to uncover further proof bearing upon what, in his mind, was a sinister conspiracy, designed in the helpless condition of some unfortunate inmate, with the passing of a fortnight the stern physician of the Asylum, other than the whispered reports, the detective's visit, and the keys which, by odd accident, had fallen into his own hands, was without additional evidence to which he might attach any real value.

In a careful espionage of the suspected nurse (and the espionage he had not left entirely to others, spending much time himself in shadowing her every move) Dr. Ruff had fully expected to readily obtain in some of her acts the proof that would definitely connect her with the plot and at the same time enable him to form an idea as to the end the plot was meant to serve. But in this, so far, the physician had been disappointed. He had not only failed to see anything in the nurse's acts to stimulate the suspicion lodged against her, but rather that which, to his stern and exacting mind, appeared the contrary; for, of the many nurses and attendants therein employed, she of all the others showed by far the greatest care and interest in her attention and duties to the inmates, a consideration, in itself, strongly bidding for the doctor's favors, but by no means weakening him in his purpose to pursue his investigations to a satisfactory explanation.

He might be made to treat lightly the whispered reports. Even the detective's story, with only belated forthcomings to back it up, might in time find something of a compromise in his mind, but not the incident of the keys with the message with which they were delivered. That was of a nature too positively suspicious to brook any

manner of explanation other than one that, in itself, carried proof of it in easy guise.

"No, no," exclaimed Dr. Ruff to Mr. Hickerson, the assistant, who thrice daily was required to report to the physician, and the exertions of whom it might here be mentioned were already losing much of their earlier vigor in the absence of new developments. "The lack of any overt act of her own to lend credence to the detective's suspicions we can neither consider as of a positive or negative value. To withstand the espionage during a fortnight does not mean that she will not take the unguarded step. Moreover," the physician went on, speaking as if to exercise more care in the choice of his words, "the very circumstance of her presence here in the capacity she has chosen, considered with her personal appearance, and the unmistakable tokens of mental cultural attainments not the usual, is, in itself, a reason to hold her in a measure suspected. No, Mr. Hickerson, we must continue to watch her, know every move, every step she takes."

"And the inmate of Room No. 879?" said Mr. Hickerson. "As yet nothing has developed from that source?"

The physician referred to some papers on his desk. He had completed but that day a most thorough reëxamination of the records, the ill-kept condition of which rendered them of little value, but in one, taken in connection with the record the detective had examined, he had hoped to gather some information. "With this does the inmate of No. 879 compare?" he asked, passing the record to Mr. Hickerson."

Not in one point," replied the assistant when he had examined the papers. "On the contrary, the physical features are well-nigh the opposite."

Convinced that further examination of the records would be useless, Dr. Ruff dismissed the assistant, not, however, until he had cautioned him again to keep a sharp eye on the nurse, and preparing himself immediately he started for the room of the suspected inmate.

"The cashier of a bank, a large sum of money, committed to a Federal prison, no plea of insanity, the appearance of a young and beautiful woman in aftermath," mused the physician as he ascended the stairs. "Plainly some plot," he reasoned with himself, but the more he thought about it the more he was puzzled to know the purpose or end it was meant to serve. Had not the robbery already been committed, the guilty apprehended? Why the woman here now? What could she expect to do? If the culprit is insane? This thought lingered in his mind. He had not seen the inmate. Could there be question with reference to the genuineness of his insanity? Not a trained detective, but a skilled physician, in this was an added interest.

He approached the door and knocked on it lustily. There was no response. He knocked again, louder. Again no response. He unfastened the door and went in. "Asleep, good!" thought the physician. An opportunity not always to be had, a chance to observe some of the physical functions apart from the mental influences, the value of which every well-trained physician knows and is eager to avail himself of the information sometimes to be had only in that way. He studied the inmate's breathing, carefully noted each part of the respiratory cycle, inspiration, expiration, and the period of rest. "Abnormal," he reflected. Then he bent nearer and inspected more closely, his watch in hand, to which his eyes frequently reverted. "Something new, a form of respiratory action not belonging to any of the classified types. Was the inmate really asleep?" For some minutes he observed him narrowly. "He sleeps feignedly," the physician was about to conclude. "In his breathing is there not the presence of voluntary influences? Undoubtedly there is. He is conscious of what he does, is aware that he is being watched, knows of my presence. Such, though, in the establishment of the state of his mentality, can neither be regarded as proof or disproof. Deception in the insane is

not possible of recognition, if in them the power exists, while in the sane it is an oft-used expedient."

The physician contemplated him deeply, earnestly, as always such questions appealed to his robust mind. To him it was a problem of determining the end of the normal, the beginning of the abnormal.

"Mr. Barton!" he presently called. The supposed Mr. Barton remained unmoved. Dr. Ruff shook him gently, then stoutly.

"Mind what you are about!" said the inmate, springing in a threatening manner to his feet.

Surprised, but not alarmed, the physician stepped back.

"How dare you intrude out of mere greed for the inquisitive and curious?" continued the inmate. "Am I not man, human, and, therefore, by certain privileges favored? Why intrude upon my rights? Why disturb my privacy? Have I not the power to call? Do you think me incapable of making known my wants? Will you, at your own choice, answer me, or am I to take it from you by means less favorable to your physical comfort?"

In much doubt as to the manner in which he might best reply, Dr. Ruff answered: "Allow me to assure you I meant no offense. As physician to this place, I called upon you in the performance of my duty. There was no response to my knock at your door. When I called you by name, you did not answer. Believing then you were asleep, I meant only to arouse you."

The inmate moved a step nearer to the physician, in his face, young yet in appearance and unmarked by the perversion within, a perversion of the type the most awful indeed, the perversion of intervals of quiet, orderly, deliberative thought, conscious, fully conscious at the time of the meaning of the condition in which the victim is placed, alternating with periods in which it is all lost in a moment.

"Believing me asleep?" the inmate sneeringly repeated;

"and you physician to this place?" The title you bear must be unfittingly worn, if that you call sleep. It would be well that your skill be put to some further test, or else safety be warned at your approach. No, I was not asleep, which your skill—the reason I question it—should have known. Nor does it stop with that. In this place we seldom sleep. Here the very laws of nature are awry. Sleep comes not as a routine in a well-ordered cycle, but rather through the caprice of chance. It, with the coming or going of darkness or the rising or setting of the sun, is without association. Declare you that sleep? Not, in truth, the semblance of it, though take it not in offense but in the spirit of the edict, 'judge not, lest ye be judged.'"

"If not sleep, why seek to deceive? I do not quite understand such acts. Will you explain yourself?" said the physician, observing the inmate with all the possible care and discrimination his special training could call to his aid, for the inmate himself bade fair to prove even more interesting than the incidents and suspicions with which he was connected.

"Ha! Explain myself?" the inmate exclaimed, the indescribable expression on his face changing to one of a decidedly thoughtful nature, and his eyes holding yet to the physician as if attracted to him by a force difficult or impossible of resistance. "Such has been, such must ever be the unfruitful endeavor of man. I cannot explain myself. Neither can I be explained. First, in my mother's womb, where, for a season, she bore me; then babyhood, barren though to the senses, for of it we are destitute of knowledge or recollections; comes then childhood with its attendant laughter, mirth, sunshine, and irresponsibility, followed, in rapid sequence, by the period of youth with its irresolution, vacillation, spurious expectations, and questionable termination. To all of which you seek an explanation."

The inmate slowly shook his head. "It cannot be.

It is impossible. It would mean the surrender of the secret of life itself. It is more than man—”

“You did not understand me,” the physician interrupted. “Not yourself in explanation I sought, but your purpose to deceive me.”

“The self is in the purpose and the purpose is in the self, or if two and not one, in the one is found the other,” answered the inmate.

Seeing both in this reply and the manner in which it was given a lagging interest, yet hoping to hold him in further conversation, “Even so, but in that, withal, no explanation,” the physician hastened to rejoin.

“Then the old, old story,” the inmate spoke up, with a show of reviving interest.

“Indeed, the old, old story,” thought the physician, as he noted the change, but he was thinking of a different story from that which had moved the mind of the inmate; the story that was being told in every room and ward of that immense building; the story of the mad mind of every inmate therein confined; indeed, the same old, old story, and plainly, unmistakably read in every act, move, expression of the young man before him. Had he once doubted his insanity? Had he once questioned its genuineness? Now all doubts were removed, all questions answered.

“To what story do you allude?” the physician asked, studying, wondering, almost marveling at the changes the few moments had brought.

The inmate did not answer, apparently gave no heed at all to the physician’s question. His mind seemed otherwise totally employed. His eyes moved in a searching manner about the room. He inspected the floor, the wall, the ceiling, peeped under the chairs, examined the bunk that served for his bed, felt in his pockets.

“Well, what now?” asked the physician, rising to his feet, not though in any surprise engendered at the inmate’s demeanor, but as a means of personal protection in case

such should become necessary. Accustomed to their presence and familiar with the abruptness with which their controlling impulses drove them from one extreme to another, extremes in many instances of a nature no one could surmise, the behavior of the inmate now was such that he knew he might expect anything.

Waiting, Dr. Ruff's eyes followed the inmate in this, his second survey of the apartment, the room with everything it contained undergoing, if possible, a scrutiny more searching than before, observing especially with what care the inmate examined his own wearing apparel, no pocket of which was unturned when he had finished.

"Have you lost something? What is it?" asked the physician as the eyes of the inmate again sought his face, and in them he could read some disappointment.

"Why, sir, the clay. I have lost it, or they have taken it from me," answered the inmate.

An expression of sympathy for the inmate's earnest, childlike sincerity moved the strongly set features of the physician. "The clay?" he repeated. "For what purpose do you wish to use it?"

"The old, old story," answered the inmate.

Interested to know what, to the inmate's mind, constituted the old, old story and in what way the clay could be associated with it, or used to illustrate or convey its meaning, Dr. Ruff summoned a porter, and the much desired clay was procured with the least amount of delay.

"Now for the story," said the physician as he placed the clay in the hands of the inmate and observed with added interest with what apparent delight he received it.

"It is a meager supply, but it may be made to serve the purpose," said the inmate, fashioning with his hands the mass of clay into the human form, in which act he showed a deftness and delicacy of touch seen in the normal man only after many years of persistent and well-guided effort.

"There, now," he exclaimed, holding it up to the physician's view. "Has it not my, has it not your form?"

"The human form well-nigh in its perfection," answered the physician, "but the merest clay, nevertheless."

"And, without God, so are we," rejoined the inmate, "for runs not thus the old, old story: 'God took of the clay of the earth, and from his own bosom the breath of life; the two he commingled, and Adam walked forth a living, conscious being?'"

"But not the story complete," suggested the physician, hoping to lead him yet further.

"Complete, complete," repeated the inmate.

And complete the physician found it to be, for all of his after baits, though offered as they were with the skill and astuteness of the wily fisherman, were received alike by the inmate with silent disdain. Convinced at length of the futility of further effort and that he must await a more communicative state of mind, the coming of which he knew might be hours or even days, Dr. Ruff bade the inmate good-by and started back to his office.

"Question the genuineness of his insanity? Not if among the hundreds here detained there is one about whom all doubt is satisfied," reflected the big physician, as he descended the stairs. That aspect of the affair his visit had settled. Insane, beyond the shadow of all reasonable doubt. The type of all types most readily ascertained. On that score no further evidence was desired. An established fact to take the place of one of the many suppositions, a truth to substitute for a surmise, the elimination of a hypothesis, an unquestionable point from which to prosecute the survey. In this new acquisition feelings of a more bitter and intense nature against the suspected nurse were aroused in the mind of the physician. He had been made, by her thoughtful and considerate attention to the inmates, to regard her for a time with weakening convictions, and now he was frank in the self-admittance that he had nothing of a positive nature to bespeak her implication. Still, had she not placed herself in such a position as to make it impossible not to suspect her? he

reasoned with himself. "And the keys," he concluded, as he reached the office, "assuredly to be used either in the exchange of inmates with the purpose to lose an identity, or else for the bolder act to set some one free of this place."

CHAPTER XIII

THE GOOD MINISTER AT THE POLICE STATION

LIFE to us, our thoughts, our ideas, our conceptions, our sentiments, our sense of honor, duty, must change as the human viewpoint changes. The convictions of to-day may not be the convictions of to-morrow. The determining precepts of the present moment may, in some near future moment, lose their power to determine. To the really calculating and candid intelligence, the standards must ever vary. Only to the dullard and unthinking can there be any permanency.

With his newly accepted ideas of the supremacy of the physical in the life of the individual, the good minister felt the deepest disappointment. But, never wanting in the courage of his convictions, he lost no time in beginning to veer his life and acts to conform to the new principles accepted. With him now it is humanity as by nature it must be, and not humanity as in his fancy he might picture or conceive.

Contrary to his former habit, which was to shut himself in with his Bible as the basis for all his thoughts, and as a guide from which he did not vary, during the past fortnight not one hour had the good man spent in his study, but in the streets, the shops, the poor districts of the city, the factories, the reformatories, the courts, the jails, places where different scenes were being enacted, where different issues of life were transpiring, where men, women, and children were actually meeting and contending with the daily problems of their existence—these now the things and places of paramount interest to the godly man, the sources from which he was to gather the facts and truths which were to formulate and guide his future ministry, the subject matter of the new lessons he must learn.

Cast in deep and earnest prayer and thought, and with a mien little resembling the stately and placid minister of a few weeks ago, we see him early to-day making his way in the direction of the police station. On yesterday his wandering footsteps had led him into the cotton mill section of the great city. He had probably been there before on some ministerial duty, or it may be that he had only passed that way, but not before had he known or really thought of the actual conditions there existent—deprivation, want, hunger, misery, disease, death, manhood, womanhood, childhood steeped in conditions impossible to normal life and health and growth, surroundings in general to sorely affect the good minister and to bring from his lips the strongest expressions of disapproval and condemnation—but of special impress upon the soul of the godly man was the alley home of Effie Harris. Long he gazed upon its desolate and deserted condition, and painful was the expression that moved on his handsome features when told how, some weeks ago, an officer of the law had carried the little girl to the lock-up, leaving her blind and sick aunt to starve and die, which she did, her death being first made known to the neighborhood by the odor which emanated from her decomposing body.

“Have I not seen enough? Nay, no more will I hear,” the good minister said when he turned away. But to leave the scene was not to free his mind of it. The story followed him to his home. In his dreams the alley home of the little girl and her blind dead aunt seemed a bitter rebuke to his past life. Asleep, he viewed it again in detail. Its walls of rough planks insecurely held in place by pieces of wire and broken, rust-eaten nails gathered from the dumps and waste places where they had been cast aside as useless, its floors of patched and knotted refuse, the worthless, the rejected, secured where, by chance, a piece might be found, or purchased with a penny that was to buy a modicum of bread, its roof of rotten and broken shingles, scraps of tin, pieces of old zinc tubs and buckets

pressed to flatness, anything to catch the falling rain or to impede or temper the fury of the winter storm. As such he had seen it, and in like form, but with a vividness in detail more impressive had it reappeared in his dreams, and with what stunning and convincing force its real and truer significance had struck in the good man's candid and impartial soul!

"Mention not in the temporal affairs of mankind," he murmured as he hastened through the empty streets, empty because of the early hour, "the all-seeing eyes of a beneficent God, but rather the potent hand of a destiny by the forces of the material directed. Aye, creatures, many of them, of circumstances and surroundings heartlessly and cruelly driving their lives from the very paths of Nature's intent, childhood so placed as to stunt and blight its very growth."

In these and like thoughts the mind of the good man was so intently engaged as for the time to almost forget the purpose of his early morning journey. He had seen the needy, the indigent, the poor, the destitute, met them often when on the streets; occasionally one had asked for food or help at his door. Their pinched appearance, stunted and undeveloped physical forms, the pale or discolored condition of their skin, muscles weak, slender, hair dry, brittle and unevenly broken—proofs all of the lack of normal physical growth and development—he had observed many times before, and, observing it, there had not been one instance when his soul was not filled with a painful compassion, with a warm and tender human interest. For their physical imperfections and discomforts he had always felt the deepest sympathy, but, until recently, with the limits of the physical all of his considerations had ended. It had not occurred to him that the same blighting and destructive effects must extend to the mental. The mind he had not regarded as a part of the material make-up in the sense that it must share coequally with the other parts of the physical body in these developmental faults

and structural deficiencies. He had thought of it as something more closely allied to the immaterial, or spiritual, something of a nature untouched, uninfluenced by the ordinary laws of the flesh and blood. "If material, then subject to the ills of the material," the good minister reasoned with himself, as he wended his way through the empty streets. "Their minds, as their frail, defective, and poorly nourished bodies; their reason, their sense of honor blighted and dwarfed and distorted. How dreadful, how awful, how inhuman, how inexpressibly cruel! Deficiency and abnormality actually grown into their physical and mental beings, and by circumstances and surroundings from which they are powerless to break away."

Such the thoughts of the good minister upon his arrival at the police station, and deep and painful the feelings they excited in his beneficent and God-fearing soul.

"The official in charge, may I see him at once?" he asked of the man who met him at the entrance.

"Not now, sir," answered the sergeant. "Not until after noon. The chief is asleep. Some social functions detained him until a late hour last night. His instructions were, not to be disturbed until twelve o'clock. Will you call after that time?"

"Then the next in authority," said the good minister. "My business is urgent. I cannot wait."

"Umph! Murder or robbery?" grunted the sergeant.

"In a sense both, or even worse," quickly and feelingly responded the good minister.

"Must be, to warrant this early disturbance," grumblingly commented the sergeant, but at the same time admitting the good minister and conducting him straight to the office.

"What now?" inquired the sergeant in charge.

"He insisted upon seeing you," explained the officer; "something very pressing, couldn't wait."

"The grievance to demand such hasty dispatch, friend?" said the sergeant in control.

"One of your prisoners," replied the good minister, "a young girl, Effie Harris by name, brought here from the cotton mill section some time ago, is here now, I believe."

"Yes, sir, she is here now," answered the sergeant after consulting his blotter, "and with very little prospect of getting away soon."

"Detained for what offense? if I may ask," said the good minister.

"The offense of larceny, so says the record," answered the portly official.

"Larceny?" repeated the good minister. "Larceny of what? if I am not denied the privilege to inquire."

"Beads," said the sergeant, reading now from the official register. "The larceny of beads, was caught in the act, beads taken from the neck of a poodle, the property and highly esteemed pet of Mrs. Jones."

"Mrs. S. K. Jones?" interrupted the good minister.

"Mrs. S. K. Jones, wife of the manufacturer, banker and multimillionaire; entered her limousine, removed the beads from the neck of the sleeping poodle, and made her escape, but was speedily apprehended and sent to a cell."

"For how long?" asked the good minister.

"Until the law is satisfied."

"What will it take to satisfy the law?"

"Six months," explained the official, "as she had no money to pay the fine and costs."

"What amount will set her free?"

"Fifty dollars."

"Here is the money."

"Paid by whom?" asked the officer.

"By Thomas Clark."

"We have no further claims upon her. She may go," remarked the sergeant, as he deposited the money in the official safe.

To reach the cell occupied by the girl the good minister

had to pass many other cells, long rows of them, and so thickly set, many of them, as to render the intervening aisles or spaces scarcely passable. Their great number and that each one should have its occupant was a painful surprise to the good man.

"Are they full all the time?" he inquired of the officer who accompanied him.

"Full?" the officer replied, "full to overflowing and others packed into every corner. You see it is easy to get here, but hard to get away! They have no money, no friends to aid them, and must be locked up to pay their fines. A tough bunch, sir, I can assure you."

"And made so," remarked the good minister, "in many instances, by the force of circumstances against which Nature itself is powerless."

"Can't say how natural it comes to them," replied the officer, unfastening a large iron gate through which they passed, "but a tough bunch any way you take them. That fellow," he pointed to the occupant of a near-by cell, "is here most of the time."

"How cruel the fate of the physical!" thought the good minister as he approached nearer to the cell that he might observe more closely the wasted, withered, and undeveloped form that was turned toward him. Hardly human. Almost the animal expression of indifference and unconcern. In his countenance little or no sign of a mental response, no token of surprise, no evidence of emotion, no quiver of agitation, no thrill of joy, no dart of hate, no mark of shame or humiliation, no flash of desire or hope or revenge, no shadow of scorn or derision or disdain, little of dejection or despair, scarcely a positive, scarcely a negative token or manifestation; yet in it the good minister saw that which set his soul aflame. The result of hampered and stunted growth, of development arrested or perverted long before the aims of nature were attained. Deficient, imperfect, inadequate, defective in body and mind. A blasting of the life in its formative

period, a thwarting of the very laws of growth, and by conditions and surroundings the character of which the individual is frequently without the power to change. "Forced to it," bitterly reflected the good minister, "by the discomforts of a bed that is hard, by food of a nutritive value falling short of nature's least requirements, by cold against which thin and threadbare garments are insufficient, by long, hard hours of work that leave no time for rest and play, by a childhood in which it is not possible for growth and development to attain to normal limits. Aye, indeed, literally crushed into unnatural and abnormal beings by the forces of their surroundings. In very truth made the subjects of ingrown defects, of structural deficiencies, of developmental faults, then punished because of these failures of nature. Am I not my brother's keeper? Nay, a thousand times no! The laws of nature we see and appreciate in the plant, or in the animal, accept at once their inevitable force, but in the life of the child we see them not, or if seeing them treat them with a consideration that amounts to the same—grossly ignore their exacting demands. Perfection of fruit and form comes not of the plant rooted in a barren or impoverished soil. That we do not expect. That we know is more than nature can do. And as it is with the formative life of the plant, so it is with the child. Food, wholesome, hygienic surroundings, sleep, rest, and play are essential to its proper growth and development, and without them in quantities fixed by the laws of nature a normal life cannot be had. In this respect the possibilities and limitations of the one are exactly the possibilities and limitations of the other. The same basic and fundamental principles are involved. The same requirements must be fulfilled. But does society think of it in that way? No. Is it a consideration in our civil requirements and regulations? It is not. Has it a place in our courts of equity and criminal jurisdiction? To many of those in the hands of whom the courts are entrusted it is unknown, and to all of them perhaps never a

factor of deciding or determining proportions. Am I not my brother's keeper?"

The lips of the good minister tightened. The scene before him he must flee. Enough the physical imperfections and malformations imposed by surroundings and circumstances impossible to avoid, but to extend the same blighting and destructive effects to the mental, which now he rightly did, was more than the good man could endure.

"The girl?" he said abruptly, turning from the cell. "Where is the girl?"

The officer soon brought the girl, and hand in hand with the good minister they immediately left the prison.

"Please, sir, may I go home to auntie?" said Effie as soon as they stepped into the street.

"Go home to your aunt?" The good minister hesitated. He had thought she had already been told of her aunt's demise. How could he gently lead her to this knowledge? How soften, modify, render its meaning less shocking? How best convey it to her childish mind?

"O, please sir, will you?" the girl pleaded.

She must know it. He must tell her, but only one word could he bring to his lips. *Dead!* How harsh it appeared to him, how abrupt, how blunt, how cruel! Was there no other word of like meaning and less difficult to speak, no kindred term by which to rob it of some of its dreadful qualities, no phrase through which to gradually and tenderly lead her to the knowledge? He searched his mind. There was none. He must utter it, and, looking hard into the street before him, he said: "Your aunt is dead."

No convulsive move marked the demeanor of the girl. No outburst of explosive grief escaped her thin lips. "Dead dead dead!" she repeated in low and plaintive tones. "Poor blind auntie dead, and dead of starvation! I thought it. I almost knew it. No one to prepare her bread. It wasn't much, some days none at all. But we didn't starve. Auntie always said it was good and blessed

me when I carried it to her bed. She was blind and didn't know it, didn't know I gave it all to her and went to bed without a taste when one small piece was all we had. Poor blind auntie dead, and all because they locked me up. Dead, dead, dead! I thought it. I almost knew that she was dead."

The girl's tone and manner dispossessed the good minister of his wonted expression of sympathy and condolence. He had the feeling, but never before experienced, that the proffer of words in amelioration of such grief was an empty mockery.

"Your aunt is at physical rest," was all he could say. There was a time when he would have said: "Submit to it, my child, for it is God's will, and he knows best." But now no personal God did he see in the physical life of the individual. He could not say to the girl, "God took your aunt," for he could not longer believe that death comes to man in obedience to the will of God expressed and fulfilled at the time of his demise. Not God, but the laws of man's material nature, he now accepted as the determining influence, somatic life or somatic death the fulfillment or nonfulfillment of these laws; the end of life not the will or wish of God, but a degree of physical destruction incompatible with further material existence. Death merely the destiny of the physical and in no sense to be regarded as providential unless in the failure or nonfulfillment of the laws of material life there is that which is to be accepted as of godly origin. No one's life is terminated by God. Never again could he offer in sympathy and consolation such an absurdity. Never again could he say, "Bow in humble submission, for it is God's will, and he knows best." For the frail being at his side the good minister felt the deepest sympathy. His big heart went out to her in the truest and tenderest sorrow, but words of comfort and solace he could not utter. When he had said, "Your aunt is at physical rest," he had said his all.

The two went on in silence through the crowded streets,

for by this time the full life of the populous city was in motion, nor did either of them break that silence until the minister's home was reached.

Hand in hand, as they had left the police station, he conducted her into the presence of his wife.

"Peace to your wonder and amazement," he said, advancing the ragged girl. "She is my text for next Sunday's sermon. Let there be ordered for her food, drink, and kindness, but otherwise leave her as she is."

"God be merciful," said the astonished Mrs. Clark, astonished not so much at the sight of the ragged girl, but at the knowledge that her husband should do such a thing. "If," she reflected, "he has not lost his reason, it has turned into unaccountable ways. Strange, strange, one queer act barely completed until followed by another still more queer."

"Invoke not God's mercy," said the good minister, mistaking the girl, and not himself, as the object of his wife's entreaty. "In the eyes of a reasonable and just God she has committed no offense, and innocence of divine mercy stands not in need."

"If the more fitting, then God's protecting care," added the tearful Mrs. Clark.

"And in that," sternly rejoined the good minister, "the end is with the asking. God's personal, protecting care to this world has not yet extended. That perhaps he reserves for heaven. Say no more to me that he is husband to the widow and father to the orphan, for in it of truth there is none."

With much difficulty Mrs. Clark suppressed the sigh that arose to her lips. She had never heard her husband talk that way. Could she longer doubt the seriousness of the disturbed state of his mind? Of the many indications of it seen in his past acts and expressions, none appeared to her quite so convincing.

"About that, perhaps, we may not always know," she

answered, but answering without any thought as to the meaning of her words.

"It cannot be otherwise," said the good minister, pointing to the girl. "If you question or doubt it, look at the living proof of it and be convinced. Does not her life and the lives of thousands of others in like condition prove it beyond all doubt? Husband to the widow? Father to the orphan?" The tones of the good minister rang with a feeling emphasis. "Nay! Never falsehood greater was spoken or written. Neither God nor man ever the true father to this girl!"

"But are we not taught that the ways of God are sometimes hidden and mysterious to our senses?" ventured the heart-broken wife. "Of our understanding can we always be assured? To see may be to believe, but to believe is not necessarily to know. In her life—"

"The girl, not your but my text," interrupted the good minister. "The text for next Sunday's sermon. Provide for her food, comfort, and kindness, but in apparel change her not."

"But she is half naked," said the wife.

"So I found her," replied the good minister, "and so, no doubt, she has ever been, but leave her as she is—not one change in her garments. If clothes are not necessary in the home or in the prison cell, are they not equally unnecessary in the church? I want her as she is."

"Your wish shall be remembered," resignedly answered the wife.

CHAPTER XIV

MISS OSBURN LEARNS OF EDGAR'S CAPTURE

THE day had been an unusually wearisome one, full of trying work; but it had passed to its evening, and Miss Taylor had just returned to her own room. A feeling of downheartedness since early morning had lent its heavy weight to the tiresome routine from which she had had hardly a moment's relief, and her fatigue was beyond the ordinary. She did not pick up the unfinished magazine of the night before. The daily paper, usually a welcome hour of pastime and relief, she left untouched in its place. Nor did she prepare for bed, but sat quietly, her hands folded, her beautiful face unmoved by the thoughts with which her mind was employed.

"Why stay here longer?" she reasoned with herself. "What more have I to accomplish? Edgar has made his escape and by this time must be a long way from this dreadful place. Further assistance in my present capacity I shall hardly be able to render. My mission here has been fulfilled, the work done, the task completed."

Her reflections were interrupted by a sharp gust of sleet and snow against her window, but at the sudden outburst of the elements she was not startled or alarmed. Nothing now takes her unawares, accustomed to the part she was acting. Fully conscious of the fact that she was being made the object of the most careful espionage, both day and night, she was never off her guard; yet she arose to her feet and moved near the window. In the noise an element of attraction, that unseen, unexplained influence associated always with the heavy but alert sense of apprehension. Is it that sometimes we are truly warned of some approaching incident, or do we merely experience some feeling or sensation in the truer import of which the foreknowledge is mistaken?

"Why this foreboding?" Miss Osburn asked herself, halfway impatient with the apprehensions for which she could assign no reason. "Edgar is safe. By this time his escape must be assured, and I have no known cause for fear."

Through the window for the time she stood looking at the night without. Hovering close to the earth were the winter clouds, and their somber shades added to the darkness, which would have rendered the view inappreciable had it not been for the fresh white snow. This enabled her to see, and objects, one after another, invited her attention, until presently the scene before her occupied her thoughts.

Who is *he* or *she* that has not been touched by a sleeping landscape robed in its winter garments of frigid whiteness? Who is *he* or *she* that has not paused in motion or thought to marvel at its woven garments of icy crispness and sparkling congelations?

"How beautiful!" she murmured, the white-hooded objects everywhere rising into view as her field of vision extended. The clump of shrubs along the walks, the viney clusters, the trestled supports, the inclosing wall. "What! Does it really move, or is it that my fancy gives to it the semblance of motion? It actually moves, past the hedge and on this way. Can it be that in this the apprehensions of the past day are to find their cause? Can it be that in this is a messenger, of the approach of whom I have been forewarned? Can it be that in this comes the first intelligence of Edgar and that, after all, he has not made his escape? A man. He turns into the walk and is making straight for the building."

In a moment Miss Osburn slipped off her shoes and, passing tiptoe from her roon, a few seconds later gained the ground floor, where, from the hall window affording a better view, she watched the approaching figure. "Has not God in to-day's forebodings," she said to herself, "spoken to me in timely warning? Has he not of this—Ah! Only a postman, as from his dress I can plainly see.

A special letter or message for some one, but at this time of night for whom could it be? Surely something important, else the time and manner of delivery would be different. Indeed, it must be something very urgent."

The door bell rang. A night guard answered the summons.

"For Dr. Ruff, a special," announced the postman.

"All right, sir; the doctor is here, in one moment."

"Sign here," said the postman, and the door closed.

"For Dr. Ruff, a special, not unusual for one in his position," thought Miss Osburn, and with the thought she started back to her room, but not far had she gone when something suddenly stopped her retracing steps. It was the recollection of a partially secluded recess formed by a sharp turn in a narrow diverging hallway which led near to the doctor's inner office and to which, after a moment's hesitation, she hurriedly made her way. Only a thin curtain now separated her from the physician, and this, opportunely to her purpose, was not tightly drawn. Through the open space she could watch him in comparative safety, in so far as the physician himself was concerned, and at that time and place the likelihood of discovery by another was a chance carrying with it little risk.

The message or letter was not a long one, but the physician read it eagerly. "I wouldn't doubt it, but it is too late to-night. I will see about it the first thing to-morrow," she heard the doctor say as he tossed the letter into a drawer and closed his desk.

"Wouldn't doubt it, too late to-night, will see about it the first thing in the morning," Miss Osburn repeated as she hurried back to her room. "God is still on my side," she said, as she turned the lock in her door. "Plainly he has forewarned me. By the day's apprehensions foreshadowed, its coming should bring with it no cause for surprise. A wisdom of discriminating qualities could expect no less. 'To-morrow. I'll see about it the first

thing to-morrow!' How acceptable the delay! for I must see that letter and before this night is gone. My fears are for Edgar. Two long months and not one word. O God, if that letter should bring the first word, if it should bear the news of his discovery, if it should contain the intelligence of his whereabouts, if he should have failed in his escape! I must see that letter and before this night is gone."

For an hour she sat motionless, her lips compressed, her hands tightly clenched one in the other. The clock struck one. "If it is to be done, I must be at it," she said, half aloud, and she arose from her seat and opened the door. That part of the building appeared deserted. She looked everywhere. No one was in sight. If discovered in the attempt, what excuse could she make? What reason could she assign for being abroad at that time? How could she satisfactorily explain it? She thought for a moment. It would strengthen, confirm their suspicions and, if possible, subject her to a closer watch. They would then doubly dog her day and night. At best it would be a risk. Would it be wise to take it? The distance was not great, the hour was late, no one was in sight. It might be the means of lending further aid to Edgar. It might mean his freedom, his happiness, his restoration to health. She could quickly do it, and, hazardous though she knew it was, she resolved to make the attempt.

She again removed her shoes and this time slipped into the dress of an orderly, which garments she had long held in readiness for use at a moment's notice; and in which, if seen at a distance, the chances of discovery would be much less likely, since orderlies at all hours frequented different parts of the building.

She stepped into the hall. "If only the doctor is out of the way," she said to herself, as she quickly and noiselessly descended the stairs. He it was who caused her the greatest concern. She had found it easy enough to avoid the others. They seemed to trouble themselves very little

to watch her, but to keep from the eyes of the doctor was a difficult task.

She stopped at the office door. This far gone, she hesitated. Would she, could she do it? "What if it is of no use to me?" she thought. "What if it contains no word of Edgar, and, if they should discover me? Have I considered it well, or do I act impulsively?"

She pushed the door ajar. The office was deserted, and the desk opened without a sound. The letter within easy reach, she had but to put forth a hand and take it; yet she questioned, she hesitated. Would she do it? She waited. Yes, she would do it. She must know its contents. It might mean everything to her. It might contain some word of Edgar. She picked up the letter and ran back to her room.

"From the Secret Service offices to Dr. Ruff, Superintendent of the Asylum. My God, it is Edgar," she said, when she had finished. "He has failed to make his escape, has been apprehended, and is now locked up in the police station. There is, there can be no mistake about it. The scars on his body are exactly as described, the burn on his chest, the cut on his foot."

What could she do about it? It would soon be morning. There was no time for anything. Dr. Ruff would examine the inmate of No. 879. The scars on his body would not be found. They would then understand it all. Edgar would be returned to the asylum. She would be dismissed. What could she do?

For the first time, she had the feeling that Providence was against her. *The scars, the scars*, the very thing that she could not remedy! Her heart filled with a wild despair. A feeling of utter desolation seized her and, in a fit of hopeless despondency, she threw herself, dressed still in the garments of an orderly, across her bed. One, two, three, the hours passed, but she did not stir. Was she asleep? You may call it sleep, if you wish—by any other term the meaning is little better expressed—but sleep it

only resembles in that there is apparent rest of the body, for perception of what passed in her thoughts still went on. Four, five, the night was gone; the morning had come, but come to find her occupying still the same position. Her bell rang violently. She was aware of the sound, but made no move to answer its call. Followed then, after a time—how long she had no idea—loud knocks upon her door.

"What's the mesage?" at length she called.

"Dr. Ruff wants you," answered an impatient voice. "He has suddenly fallen ill. Wants you right away. For ever so long I have been ringing for you. What's the matter with your bell?" the orderly went on.

Miss Osburn's countenance brightened. "Dr. Ruff ill," she said to herself, "suddenly stricken."

Hurriedly then, as if moved by some urgent impulse, she cast aside the male garments, smoothed and arranged her hair, and reported to the offices below.

During the night Dr. Ruff had experienced a severe chill, associated with fever, cough, pain in the side, together with all the other initial symptoms of acute pneumonia. Already there had been a consultation of physicians, and it was ordered that a competent nurse be placed in charge. For this special duty Miss Osburn had been selected. Though only in service a few months, she had come to be regarded as the institution's most efficient nurse, and, no doubt, rightly so, for she carried to her work an intelligence capable of profiting by the lessons experience offered. However much she stood in the suspicion of Dr. Ruff, he had often been greatly impressed with her work as a nurse. The ease and wisdom with which she handled the inmates and her wonderful influence over them on a number of occasions had been such as to engage his special notice and to add advantageously to his own store of knowledge and tact, so much needed in their successful control. Moreover, during his own illness, in her attendance upon himself was his only opportunity for watching her, and, sick as he was, he was determined that

no move on her part should escape his knowledge. Not that he needed more evidence to satisfy a lingering or recurrent doubt as to her implication. On that score his mind was at ease, but the proof of it, as yet, consisted wholly of plausible suppositions, and it was in some act or other evidence of a positive nature that Dr. Ruff hoped and fully expected to find the confirmation of all his suspicions. He was convinced of her guilt, but he wanted the proof of it in her own acts, the reason, more than any consideration of her skill as a nurse, for her having been assigned to his case.

Upon her entrance in the sick room, Miss Osburn was not long in perceiving that Dr. Ruff was very ill. She was not familiar with the clinical manifestations of pneumonia. Of that little had she seen, but, from what she had learned in a general way, she knew that the illness was of a serious nature and that the Doctor, at best, would be confined to his bed for a number of weeks. As yet she hardly knew why, but in this realization was a feeling closely allied to exultation. She almost admitted to herself that she was glad the Doctor was ill. Confined to the bed, he could not watch her, and while now she had very little hope that the discovery would not be made, still she eagerly welcomed any prospect of postponing it. So long as Dr. Ruff was forced to keep his bed, she felt that the inmate of Room No. 879 would not be examined. How eager is humanity to grasp at deferment! How readily do we accept the delay of that which is contrary or displeasing to our hopes and desires! It scarcely matters what it may be, if we can only postpone it it at once becomes bereft of much of its dread. Even death itself deferred to a future date, though we know the time must soon come, loses much of its horrors.

In the Doctor's illness Miss Taylor saw the possibility of a little delay. Not now, not to-day, but to-morrow, at some future time, and, while she was without hope, without plans, yet in the brief respite her despair was

lessened. All day she remained close at the bedside of the ill physician. His suffering was great, so great as to require her almost constant attention. Scarcely did she leave him for one moment. With the coming of night the symptoms all grew worse, cough more frequent and annoying; pain sharper, deeper; fever higher, hotter. The attending physician called. "A frank pneumonia," he said gravely, after a lengthy examination, "and bad for the early stage. His suffering is intense, an agony at every breath, and of itself a source of danger. He must have relief, an opiate, morphia hypodermatically. The suffering requires it, and to no other remedy will it yield. Give it not at fixed intervals, but as, in your judgment, it becomes necessary for the relief of suffering and a guaranty of the needed amount of sleep."

In keeping with the doctor's orders, Miss Osburn immediately administered the opiate and was surprised at the quick coming of relief, for in a little while all evidence of pain was annulled, and her patient fell into a restful sleep. "Wonderful! It is wonderful," she said to herself when she began to realize something of the almost magical powers of the drug. "His pain has disappeared as if removed by enchantment. His relief is seemingly as perfect and complete as if the disease had suddenly come to a cure. What? Is it that there is yet some way by which it may be averted? Is it that in this, chance, fate, Providence beckons me to a new hope? Wonderful! Well-nigh magical in its effects. In it the power to shut men's eyes, to deafen their ears, to steal away their faculties in an unconscious sleep. What? Is it that in the drug I have found an unexpected aid, an ally, silent, powerful, trusty, a confederate not caring to share my secret, an accomplice to the usefulness of whom a knowledge of my purpose can make no difference? What? Is there yet a way to avoid it?"

Suggested by the ease and promptitude with which she had seen the opiate put to rout the suffering and unrest

of the stricken physician, in the truly wonderful powers of the drug was the foundation for the desperate resolve that was rapidly taking form in the woman's soul.

"What? Is there yet a way to avoid it? *The scars! the scars!*" With the aid so unexpectedly come to her assistance, might she not be able to implant the threatening marks upon the person of the present occupant of Room No. 879? "Fire still burns," she inwardly whispered; "and the knife, when properly applied, must leave its traces."

"A daring, a desperate undertaking, but they who dare not do not." For a moment the woman, almost wild now with the new purpose, bent her eyes upon the sleeping physician, her cheeks red with the conflict of the thoughts within. "'Not at fixed intervals, but as, in your judgment, it becomes necessary for the relief of suffering and a guaranty of the needed amount of sleep.' Such the orders. Such, if my memory serves me right, the very words of the physician. He left it solely to my own sense of discretion, *but can I be discreet?* God be the judge. Reason sits weak with me to-night. I fear I cannot. He sleeps soundly." She stooped over the bed and felt the sick man's pulse. "In his face no expression of suffering. He is at rest. His pain seeks not to torment him. His agony has found repose. His restlessness the shades of quietude. He is at ease, but with the passage of time the drug must weaken, its strength must wane, the effect must wear away, the sleep must soon end in wakefulness, he again to watch me, he again to spy upon my every move, he again to track me as the hunted hare is pursued by the remorseless hound. Nay! Discretion, urge not thy claims against the purpose that is forming in my soul. Nay! By thy pleadings think not to weaken the new resolve. It is formed, this moment." She seized the syringe, hastily charged it with a second dose of the powerful drug and, with a firm hand, thrust it deeply into the body of the senseless man. "There, there, now," she

said as she withdrew the needle from his feverish flesh. "If before there was sleep and freedom from pain, with this the sleep must be more perfect and the pain transformed into pleasure. Aye! Aye! Sweet indeed must be the portion to barter unrest and suffering for rest and comfort. But sweeter to me by a thousandfold the opportunities this night offers. Move not, either in limb or feature, my patient stern, or deep to the needle's length into thy scorching body a double dose I'll send. At last the reins are in my hands. I may pale, a trembling may unsteady me, but to my newborn hopes or failure's last goal I mean to drive. This is the unseen chance for which I have waited and suffered and endured. This is the opportunity come to me at the fulfillment of a Providence that bids me again take courage. This is the lesson that teaches me to abandon not hope even in the last moment, for the beginning of its sixtieth second knows not what its end will bring."

In a menacing attitude she approached still nearer the sick physician's bed. "Hold fast thy slumbers and stir not," she continued. "Purpose rules in the spell that charms me, and in the drug intrusted to my hands is an unending sleep. At the bidding of one thing only will I pause or turn, and to the lengths it may reach know I not in what manner it conforms with the limits of safety. Be it, therefore, thy most sacred care to guard well thine own peace until I return, and this warning take from me: Open or move not an eye, I am not to be further tempted, and indifferent I am of what to-morrow holds for *me* or *you*, if the hope of this night should prove illusive."

By backward steps she moved away from the bed to stop near the center of the room, where, for a time, she watched the drugged and disease-stricken physician, yesterday strong in health and purpose, now a helpless, knowingless heap of human flesh. "Silenced, silenced for this night," she murmured, and, turning for the door, she hurriedly stole from the room.

CHAPTER XV

A WILD NIGHT RUN

A MATTER of but a few more moments, and the nurse of the stricken physician had made her way to an infrequented exit at the back of the building through which she passed out into the cold and snow of the December night. Not in a direct course traversing the Asylum grounds, but turning to right or left as the welcome shadow of some outstanding object offered its protection, the building she soon placed a safe distance behind her. Nor lagged she, now that all danger of immediate discovery was passed, but on and on through the blinding snow, only lessening her pace or pausing a moment when in doubt as to the most direct way leading into the heart of the city. Now two o'clock or past; at five it would be daylight, and before that time she must be back at the Asylum. Three hours in which to make the trip.

The distance and the deep and blinding snow she knew, under ordinary circumstances, must require twice as much time, but by haste she would crowd the space of two moments into one, and the time in that way doubled, or the distance reduced to one half, would give her a safe margin.

Though a desperate, a dangerous undertaking, it must be done. In no other way could his safety be assured. In no other way could the difficulty be overcome. In no other way could she offer further assistance. She was firm in the resolve, set in the purpose. It must be done. On the inmate's body the scars that were threatening the safety of Edgar must be implanted. And to this purpose she now hastened forward, despite the cruelties and obstacles of the severe night.

"The one, the only chance," she reflected, as her ever-quickenings and lengthening steps rapidly lessened the

distance between her and the city, and that chance of providential offering; that chance born of the physician's sudden and unexpected illness. A strengthening and sustaining thought and yet, withal, one that sent a shudder to her racing heart, one that deepened the crimson in her glowing cheeks, for in this thought her mind was turned back to the sick room she had left so recently, back to the drugged and ill physician. She could see his prostrate form, she could hear his labored and noisy breathing. In contemplation of the scene, she reduced the mad pace of her onward rush, lessened the hurry of her fleeting though snow-impeded steps.

"Is the physician sleeping still?" she inquired of herself. "Will the drug last until my return, or will its effects pass quickly? If awake now, has he missed me? Could it be possible that he has already called, that the alarm has been given, that my absence is known, and that at this instant they are searching for me, some seeking me in my room, knocking, pounding loudly on my door, some looking, calling up and down the halls, some following my tracks in the snow, all speculating, all wondering where I could be?"

The thoughts were distracting, maddening. Why had she not stopped long enough to give him another dose? Why had she not gagged, bound him tightly to his bed? She rushed on. The streets of the city were opening up before her, but in their winding and unknown course another uncertainty, a new danger. Could she find the way?

"It is a race with time," she murmured, a strong blast of wind staggering her into a deep snowdrift, "and the odds against me growing; the obstacles thickening at my feet; the impediments more difficult at each onward bound, but it must be done. At nothing will I stop; at no barrier will I pause in question; at no opposing force, animate or inanimate, will I stay my progress in doubt or fear. The inevitable impels me to the deed. It must be done. The identifying marks that threaten the safety of

Edgar must be placed upon the occupant of Room No. 879. The telltale scars, irremovable in themselves, must be cut, must be burnt into his very flesh. A race with time, the odds against me, but I must, I will win; or, if losing, lose with it all knowledge thereof."

She rushed still onward; another block placed behind her; another turn to right; this thoroughfare painfully, eagerly traversed to gain yet another avenue, then four long squares at straight angles extending, and the object of her journey was reached.

It was a small structure flanked on either side by buildings much larger and for which reason it might have been easily passed unnoticed had it not been for the light within. This readily pointed her to the entrance, and the door, yielding to her touch, rang violently a bell as it swung open to admit her.

"The devil be hard pressed to weather this night," said a voice far back in the building, and a man wrapped in a great fur coat, its broad collar standing erect, emerged with much difficulty from among the boxes and bottles and presented himself at the counter. He was either low beyond the ordinary, or the counter high as compared with the average, for barely half of his head and face was visible above it. His small, deep-set eyes showed yet the sleep that had been so recently interrupted, and in his hair, long cut and ruffled, were scattered strands of the excelsior that had served for his pillow. That he was not in the best of humor, or was by nature of a turbulent turn of mind, his manner was frank to admit.

"Chloroform, morphine, knife, suture material, and dressings for a minor surgical procedure," quickly responded Miss Osburn, in answer to the night clerk's gruff inquiry as to why she had made it her choice to call at that untimely hour. Under a knowledge of the purpose of his ill-timed feminine customer, the somnolent apothecary began to revive. His small eyes grew larger and less deeply anchored. Easily four-fifths of his head

and face was seen to rise above the counter. He turned down his great coat collar and, at a few strokes of the hand, dislodged the excelsior and smoothed his ruffled hair. Awake now, he could see the woman. The expression of some urgent and determinate purpose in her eyes, the flush of exercise on her cheeks, the melted snowflakes gathered into droplets beading her brow. Especially did he take note of the evidence of exhaustion as seen in her unsteady motion, her tidily fitting dress without cloak or wrap, her bare head, the soggy but otherwise neat shoes, proofs of the long run she had taken through the snow, all of which was registered in the apothecary's mind with more than the usual interest, and in much of which he must have seen that to favorably affect him, for when he again addressed her there was a decided change in his demeanor.

"The time and manner of your coming, madam," he said, "are convincing proof both of the urgency and need of that which you seek, and the articles I have here, and for sale—the sutures, dressing, and like commodities of a harmless nature, to any one who has the purchase price, but of the deadly chloroform and more especially the morphine, a drug to be dispensed only on the prescription of a legally registered and reputable physician. Sorry that I can only in part supply your wants," added the night clerk when he saw the disappointment that moved in the beautiful face of his unusual customer.

"You, then, fear to entrust me with the drugs," said Miss Osburn, moving from her position some distance from the counter to come near to where the night clerk stood.

"Not I, madam," answered the apothecary. "It is not a matter of trust or distrust upon my part, but the law it is that so avowedly refuses you." This was a hindrance for which Miss Osburn was unprepared, a delay she had not included in her calculations. Her one thought had been to reach an open shop and, that accomplished, to secure

what she wanted would be merely a matter of a few moments of time, but something there was in the apothecary's manner and reply that led her to hope that, even yet, some arrangement might be made through which to secure the drugs.

"Not by you, then, of your own volition, but by the law I am refused these urgent needs," she said.

"Yes, madam," replied the apothecary. "The question is not one for me to decide. You understand it is the law that refuses you, the Federal law, the government of the United States. I have no power in the matter."

"But," she urged, "in case of an emergency, and one in the nature of which a few moments of time must decide the issue—and an issue upon which the happiness or perhaps the very life of some one depends—is there no provision, no recourse by which such might be avoided, and at the same time the spirit of the law suffer no violation?"

"Of such recourse I am uninformed," answered the druggist. "It is not in the statute. For like emergencies there is no provision."

"In letter only can that be true," urged still the woman. "The spirit of no law, either divine or enacted by man, makes not provision for that which an emergency may give rise to. Failure in this, in many instances, would be to foster and sanction the very injustice it was meant to discourage and condemn. Justice in itself is of a nature not to be confined by limits so rigidly and so narrowly drawn. Supply me with the drugs and to-morrow, or at some near date thereafter, the prescribed formality will be given its due and authoritative form."

"No, no, madam," rejoined the night clerk. "However pressing, however urgent, I must refuse you. I cannot supply the drugs until both the spirit and the letter of the law are fulfilled. If warranted by an emergency, my own protection demands a different course."

"Your own protection," eagerly repeated Miss Osburn,

taking from her purse some money. "In that case an expedient is readily improvised, and one, too, in which your safety can find no scruples. Supply me with the drugs and hold in lieu this gold until the needed formalities have been satisfactorily arranged and offered in redemption of the same."

The proffer of money as a guaranty of the woman's good faith, in the night clerk's estimation, could not be more strongly set forth; really a consideration to soften the most obdurate scruples of many of us, and unquestionably the most direct way to a confidence of trusting proportions. The pledge was convincing. The apothecary himself, had he been allowed the privilege, could not have made it more satisfactory. No better personal protection did he desire than the yellow coins she held in her hands.

"They are dangerous drugs—must be applied with caution—to what purpose do you mean to use them?" he inquired.

"From my dress," she replied, "have you not already guessed my station? A nurse and this night under the strict orders of a physician. Perhaps I should have—"

"No. It is sufficient; here are your drugs," interrupted the apothecary, and the yellow coins clinked in his hands as Miss Osburn turned in haste to the door.

This delay at an end and the open streets once more before her, with three miles of deep snow and less than one hour in which to make the return, she immediately set off in a run. "Nothing else to delay me," she said to herself after half a dozen blocks had been speedily traversed and she had been forced to slacken her pace for a little rest. "And, O, if the daylight does not outstrip me; if the doctor is sleeping still; if my absence has not been discovered; if my strength will only hold out!"

Leaving here the street thus far followed to turn into another more favorable to her course, barely had she passed the first crossing when the hoarse voice of a big policeman commanded her to stop.

"This a nice night," he said, taking his position immediately in front of her, "a charming night, to be sure, for a lone woman, bare-headed and in a section of the city where decent people in broad daylight dare not be seen."

"But you have not—" Miss Osburn tried to explain.

"No, I have not," snappishly interrupted the burly patrolman. "I have not heard your excuse, nor is it to be supposed that I will, standing here in this knee-deep snow. It is enough, more than enough, that I find you here; so quietly come along, and at the police station they will hear and pass on the validity of any claim you may decide to make."

With which the big patrolman seized her by the arm and started down the street.

"But you must hear me," she said, tearing loose from the officer's hold. "Not another step will I take until you hear my explanation."

"I'll call for your explanation when I want it," the big patrolman growled, making a move to lay forcible hands upon her for the second time, but desisting at her command to stop, for something there was in her tones that warned him not to again touch her.

"Only allow me to explain," she continued, the same deterrent ring in her words; "and if then you see cause to doubt, or reason to question the attempted justification, confirmatory evidence may be easily had."

"Your explanation, then, but let it be brief," sneeringly remarked the officer.

"It is simply this," said Miss Osburn, tendering the package for his inspection. "The needs for an emergency not improved by this unwarranted delay."

"And I might say," commented the officer, "an emergency in the manner of your meeting to invite suspicion."

Examining then the package with painful slowness, the patrolman added in a more conciliatory tone as he returned the bundle to the hands of the anxiously waiting woman: "I suppose it is all right; you may go."

This hindrance at last at an end, but the thought that it now might be utterly impossible for any human strength to reach the Asylum before daylight began to weigh upon the soul of the onrushing woman with a burden such as to greatly impede her progress.

"Almost three miles," she murmured, as she paused for a breath. "Almost three miles of this deep and heavy snow. Is it possible? Can it be done? Have I yet the time? Have I yet the strength, the physical endurance, or is it beyond all human power? Almost three miles of deep snow. Can I do it? or must I in this lose it all?"

The thought of failure was stunning, distracting. Her head grew giddy, dizzy, the very street in which she stood seemed to rise and fall in even swells, small as at first issuing from her feet, but growing rapidly in size until down its length there appeared a series of snow-formed ridges, rising in gradational order, higher and yet higher, until in the last was a sheer mountain of impassable proportions.

"Not in this way," she said. "It is not within my strength. Such snowy heights I cannot climb. Some other course must be sought." But when facing about, that in a different direction the impossible be not confronted, at every point of the compass her eyes were met by snow-wrapped elevations lifting themselves in numerical regularity to greater and greater heights until, in seeming appearance, to place against the very heavens the unsullied brow of the most lofty grown—apparently the whole world around her formed into one vast snow-lined crater, and she to its most nether depths descended. Ah! threatened failure, impending defeat, was ever before, out of thy discouraging and distracting imaginings, erected a bulwark of more formidable and gigantic proportions in which to demonstrate the illimitableness of thy creative powers, or to show in a more convincing and comprehensive way the infinitude of thy structureless bastions! "O God," she said, "wherefore this seeming snow-bound

crater of unthinkable depths into which I have fallen, this very sinking of the earth beneath my feet? Is it in this that thy voice is raised in disapproval of my course, or do I tarry at the false and unfounded creations of my confused and distraught mind? What? A sign! 'Conveyances for hire, automobile or carriage.' Do I read it aright? or is this too the production of an uncertain vision? Nay! I mistake it not," she hopefully whispered, as she forced herself near.

Nor had she, for in less than thirty minutes thereafter, with the assistance here secured, she had made safe ingress to the big Asylum building.

She hurried through the long halls. The silence of the early morning hour, so unusual to the place, was noticeably oppressive, only an occasional murmur, muffled and indistinct, from the floors above, the first feeble grumblings of a new day, but soon to burst into gibberish and boisterous cries.

"If only the doctor is still sleep," she said, half aloud. "If he has not missed me, if my absence—what? moans and articulate calls from the sick room." She stole to his door. The cold sweat started upon her brow.

"*Water! water!*" in thick but distinguishable tones she heard the sick man call. Did he know of her absence? Had he missed her? Could she enter? She hesitated. "*Water! wa-ter!*" but now in tones more difficult, in accent less distinct.

"Thank heaven," she whispered. "He raves in the delirium of the burning fever or the dying opiate. He has not missed me. Unconscious still of my absence, he can have no knowledge—or if, in part, to consciousness restored, of this night he will know little."

"*Water! water!*" in voice less audible.

"Yes, in a moment, I am coming," she said aloud; and, hastily procuring the water, she entered the room. Dry from the scorching fever and the dessicant drug, at sight of the water the sick man almost threw himself from his

bed. He seized upon the cup with all of the frantic urgency of his anguishing thirst, wrested it from her hands, and at a single move emptied its full contents into his parching throat. "*More! more!*" he appealingly cried. A full pail was brought, and cup after cup, in eager haste, he swallowed until, moved in pity, Miss Osburn turned her head away. For her woman's nature, the scene was more than she could endure. Hot tears of genuine sympathy filled her eyes, and when she again glanced in his direction to see the diseased and poisoned physician fall in exhaustion back to his pillow, a pang of true remorse sent its shivering darts into her very soul.

If by over use of the narcotic she had imperiled the life of the physician, to do so had not been her primary or determining purpose. Indeed, she had not meant, or even thought, to really harm him. In her nature were not to be found such promptings or inclinations. On the contrary, at such deeds her normal self would have strenuously and violently revolted. A compassionate and considerate being, and compassionate and considerate in the undis-traught meaning of the terms, the injustice she had done to the ill physician had come at the urgent and irresistible demands of a mental tension in one direction bent, until completely and utterly overpowering all other functions. In the greater consideration of the accomplishment of her purpose, the possible or probable harm to the physician, in her mind, was as a trivial physical injury inflicted coincident with a wound of great severity, it not being within the powers of the sensibilities to have even the slightest knowledge or recognition of the existence of the first until the pain of the latter is annulled. If she had harmed the ill physician, it was not because to harm him had been her wish or purpose; but because, in the irresist-ance of the directing and controlling impulse, not to harm him was beyond her power.

But, as is often the way with the achievement of its aim, the force of the impulse lends its dominant features, and

so it was in this instance, for now the deed of which she accepted the guilt, with its dangers to the very life of the physician, the care of whom had been intrusted to her hands, rested in all its remorseful weight upon her penitent soul.

"God knows my heart," she inwardly said, as she gently, tenderly wiped the cold perspiration from the brow of the half-unconscious man and, in a few moves, brought to his disarranged bedding that orderly array at the trained hands of the skilled nurse so easy to come.

"To you I meant no harm," in unvoiced thought she continued to address him, her beautiful eyes wet still in the womanly compassion now supreme in her soul; "and if to your way perils I have added, in my way they were insurmountable barriers, and removable or passable only when before you cast. It is that fate has so ordered our course, and not that I would willingly, purposely do you a wrong."

The ill physician gasped, struggled for breath.

"Does he breathe?" she exclaimed. "Does he still live? O merciful God, what have I done?"

CHAPTER XVI

EDGAR'S DREAM A GLIMPSE INTO THE HIDDEN PAST

LOCKED within the narrow confines of a dirty prison cell where he was left to his own thoughts, Edgar Barton promptly returned to a contemplation of his past existence, the least trace of which, as yet, he had not been able to recall, and of which, the more he thought about it, the more he was puzzled and troubled to understand its meaning. "A hidden, an impenetrable past," he murmured, his wearied and flagging faculties struggling ever to break through the impenetrable veil. "A life somewhere, in some way associated with my present condition; an existence with which this might, must have some connection—something, somewhere, but where? what? And this is the sequel," he continued in tones more assertive, "this the result, this the harvest of the unknown planting, this the end of which the ways leading to it have been hermetically sealed. This—" He paused a few moments in the outspoken contemplations, listening to the deep and noisy breathing of the sleeping prisoners in the noxious cells about him, and wondering in his mind if there was one in all that frightful number in whose life the past had been blotted out.

"To all my mental faculties a vast and silent void," he presently continued, "a dead and echoless past. Is it not enough that I should question the integrity of my mind? Is it not enough that the quality of my perceptive forces should fall within the pale of the most careful inquiry? Is it not enough that I should doubt my mental powers, one and all, doubt my ability to rightly understand, to think, to reason in orderly sequence? No, no; it is not in this quarter that I am to seek the explanation. No, no; it is not in some mental perversion that the problem is to be solved. No, no; it is not that my mind

has been turned into abnormal ways, that my reason, my powers of intelligence have been driven from their natural course. No, no; it is not in this that the mystery is to be dissolved, that the explanation is to be found. *Insane?* No, no; to such it cannot be ascribed. No, no; in such is not the correct answer. My senses are intact; my mind is orderly, clear, deliberate, conscious, fully conscious of its powers to rightly conceive; conscious, fully conscious of its sane and normal action. In this is not the mystery. In this is not the explanation to my dead and irrevocable past. In this the search is hopeless."

Contending, struggling with these and similar reflections until, in time, reaching a stage of mental exhaustion, incapable of further coherent thought, the perplexing and inexplicable problems in the mind of the young man were at last beginning to mix and lose themselves in the shadowy and imperceptible approaches to that state of mental inaction in the perfect completion of which is a restful sleep.

How marvelous the passing of the human intelligence from activity to repose, from consciousness to unconsciousness! The mysteries of the young man's past existence, the unexplainable condition of his present surroundings all dissolving and disappearing in the gathering sleep. Exhaustion at last. His eyelids close, his lips move in some last and inaudible murmurs, and against the rusty iron bars of his prison cage his head reclines. Marvelous, indeed, the passing of the human intelligence from activity to repose, from consciousness to unconsciousness; but more truly wonderful its creative and reproductive powers when freed of all knowledge of itself! Sleep at last, the sleep of exhaustion, but not the dreamless sleep, for, transported from the cruel prison cell to the days of his youth, on the face of the unconscious man a smile played as scene after scene of his happy childhood, bursting fresh and real from the forgotten and obliterated graves of the buried years, arose before him.

In the parental home it was early morning. The new

sun rays crisp and bright in their freshness and broken into a thousand sparkling shivers by the curtained windows through which they poured to offer each ray in its own splintered brightness, a separate greeting to the buoyant and happy boy. Ah! dungeon of the imprisoned, from between thy rust and slime-coated bars was ever before witnessed such a scene? The day's life in detail, even down to the most trivial, the sleeper experienced and lived over again. Its boyish pursuits and pastimes, its joys and delights, its trials and reverses, felt and encountered with a vividness and spirit capable only to the childish mind. Home! How the heart leaps and throbs at the very suggestion! "Father! Mother!" With what impassioned eagerness the words burst from the lips of the dreamer!

In an instant he was upon his feet, clutching, wringing at the steel bars of the prison cage, his dilating eyes staring wildly into the increasing gray of the coming dawn. The dream had vanished. The picture had faded, to reveal to the reviving senses of the prisoner the same foul prison, but in that one particular cell was a changed occupant.

In the dream he had had a glimpse of the life behind him. In the dream the inexplicable past had at last yielded up a part of the mystery of which it seemed everywhere unapproachably sealed. In the dream was a tiny ray of light from the black depths of an existence hitherto utterly closed to all of his powers of penetration.

"Father, mother, home, an innocent and happy childhood, or so it was pictured," said the prisoner to himself, struggling in his mind to recall every detail of that which has been so vividly revealed to his sleeping senses. "Yes, yes, thank heaven! thank God! it is, it must be true," he continued, a new light gathering in his eyes, a new hope stirring in his soul. "*Yes, yes, thank heaven! thank God! it is, it must be true.* Such are the demands of nature, such are the inexorable laws of the physical, such it must have

been. How could there have ever been one doubt in my mind? Yes, yes; life could not be otherwise. Yes, yes; it is, it must be true. My existence, my course at one time, the existence, the course common to humanity, my life at one time the life, perhaps, of an ordinary child, a boy with the feelings, the sensations, the thrills, the hopes, the joys, the innocent joys of boyhood retained within normal limits, directed, excited, determined by natural impulses. Such, in reason, I must accept. Such, through the imperious demands of nature, must have been, and yet—" The brow of the prisoner darkened, his lips quivered, tightened, and in the hesitancy was revealed the reverse of the one sustaining hope that, for a time, had encouraged his despairing soul. "And yet," he falteringly continued. "though true it must be, I have in knowledge thereof only the questionable, the uncertain evidence of a dream, the mere wandering of the mind in an unconscious sleep, evidence in no sense of a positive nature, proof that cannot be regarded as proof, a claim in no man's ears worthy the mention; merely a dream, a capricious, an uncertain dream, unknown to myself, my past dead and forgotten, my all the diminutive world of this foul prison about me and a brief space of time vaguely, indistinctly perceived before the prison doors opened to shut me in."

Words here failed the young man, and for some moments he sat gazing vacantly into the prison gloom about him, gazing vacantly into the steel-barred cells, row upon row of which stretched away in the distance, gazing vacantly at their sleeping and slumbering occupants

"If no more," he brokenly murmured, "what cruel fate to falsely allure with even a spark seen through the years of accumulated darkness? If no more, how painful, how inexpressibly painful to give rise to hopes not possible of realization! If no more, why mock my unbending fate with one glimmer on the distant precipice of the impassable gulf? That Providence has willed it so is it not enough?

O ye gods of destiny, to treat, to trifle thus with my hopes, have ye not surpassed the ends of mortal endurance? Have ye not transcended all human limits? Have ye not—So it would appear, but no, no.” The face of the young man brightened. Despair had spent its forces. Despair had struck its deepest depths in his tortured soul, but deeper, deeper still the reviving hope. “So it would appear, but NO, NO.”

How frequent, how sudden the reverse of extremity! and how often it is true that at the uttermost limits of dejection is found encouragement, hope! No, no. The scenes of the prisoner’s recent dream were repeating themselves in his mind, painting again in the faultless colors of innocence and youth father, mother, family, home, childhood.

“It is, it must be true,” he impassionately exclaimed. “It is, it must be.”

The fervid lips of the prisoner were here silenced by the noise of footsteps. He turned to see Mr. Eoff approaching his cell.

“I had thought, I had hoped,” said the detective, surveying the prisoner in his cool, deliberate way, but with misgivings of a nature hitherto unfelt, “that by this time you had come to think differently of your situation and that you might care to say something in your own behalf. Certainly to one of your intelligence it is needless for me to mention the ill effects of any unwonted reticence. By that you must know you only strengthen the evidence already placed against you. Suspicion, though founded upon circumstances in themselves truly of a trifling nature, when guarded by an overzealous silence, becomes proof of no mean importance. Your interests can best be served by a free and full confession.”

“Is it, then, for some misdemeanor that I am here imprisoned?” Edgar interestedly inquired.

“Misdemeanor?” repeated the detective, endeavoring in his analytical mind to assign to its proper meaning

the evident changed condition of the prisoner, in whom now to the penetrating eyes of Mr. Eoff was a man far different from the one he had left only a few hours ago. "Misdemeanor? If no more than a misdemeanor, it would be a matter of little concern, indeed an insignificant affair, but the charges for which you are detained are of a far more serious nature. You are to answer to the accusation of murder, with robbery its premeditated purpose."

"Murder, with robbery its premeditated purpose?" Edgar slowly reiterated.

"So the accusation stands," affirmed Mr. Eoff, "and with the most positive evidence to back it up; in fact, proof of a more convincing nature could not be had. Wet and soiled garments, fresh wounds on your person, money in amounts to warrant an explanation of its source, a suspicious note in your pockets. To all of which you offer no explanation. Is that not evidence of a nature to convince the most incredulous? Is that not—"

The detective was checked by the changing expression on the face of the prisoner, in the mind of whom, though deeper steeped in mystery, a different trend of thought was contending for the mastery of his powers of intelligence. Murder? Had he committed murder? Was murder a part of his hidden and unaccountable past? *Murder? murder?* But it would lead to an explanation of his present condition. It would establish his identity to himself and to those who must know him. It would result in the discovery of his father, his mother, his friends, and perhaps bring them to his assistance. It would break into the dead, dark past so mysteriously closed to all of his efforts at penetration. Murder? Was murder a part of the mystery? Had he been drugged, or in some other way rendered unconscious? Had his mental faculties by some unknown influence been rendered unmindful of the life behind him, unmindful of the commission of the awful deed of which he stood accused?

Such the thoughts, such the reflections, such the questions that filled the mind of the prisoner and carried him away from the scrutinizing detective, who was quick enough to follow his ever-changing facial expressions, but who, despite his unquestioned skill in the detective art, was at a complete loss to interpret their meaning.

Had the redoubtable Mr. Eoff at last found one in the personal equation of whom a satisfactory solution could not be made? Was it possible that in the young man before him the formidable student of crime had met one to set at naught the many little individual and personal proofs or disproofs of guilt or innocence, as the case might be, and proofs or disproofs which, throughout a long and varied career, had served him with such unerring results? Was it possible that in the prisoner before him the infallible Mr. Eoff had found one to place an uncertain value upon the very things that had made him an officer of unusual success?

At first not doubting the guilt of the young man, the evidence at hand in no way giving rise to a question even mildly hinting the contrary, but now in the mind of the detective there was being evolved much of an uncertain nature. Unquestionably he had committed murder. The proof of that was too openly convincing to admit of the slightest doubt, but, even murder committed, was the prisoner really a criminal? Mr. Eoff, through many years of experience and the most exacting study, including the subject in all of its possible phases, had come to regard himself as capable, in a measure, of answering this question. Though his prisoner be entangled in a net of evidence complete and flawless in itself, the detective always preferred to see the reflections of such evidence in the personality or demeanor of the accused, and its total absence in his final computations was not infrequently a factor of more than minor importance. That crime has its markings, if only we can discover them, his one fundamental rule of action, and a rule, no doubt, in the intelligent

application of which was to be found the secret of the detective's unparalleled success. Last night he had noticed in the young man that which he readily recognized as not of the ordinary. In fact, to his trained powers of observation, trained to quick and accurate action, there was immediately noted a marked deviation from the normal, an enigma, as he had tersely expressed it. But beneath it, upon a more extended examination, he had expected to find some of the markings so common to the general run of miscreants. Were they present and he had failed in their discovery? A possibility, but one of little consideration in the mind of Mr. Eoff. Could the prisoner be of a type never before encountered in his long and varied career as an officer? A likelihood by no means likely. Was he not a criminal at all? The same blunt question of a few moments before, but in its repetition an irritant now to the nonplused officer. Not a criminal? Why had he thus early admitted, even in his own mind, the possibility of such a thing? Not a criminal? The last question that should demand his attention, the last question for which he should seek an answer.

There was something of a frown upon the broad brow of the detective; in his steel gray eye a gleam the prelude to some decided turn either in thought or action. Innocent? Why had he thus early admitted, even to himself, the possibility of such a thing? Was it not his life work to hunt down the wrongdoer, scent out the criminal in his nefarious practice, bring the culprit to answer for his infamous deeds? A life work in which he had won distinction for himself, established a reputation without a nonpareil, made his own name a terror in the world of criminality? But this he had not done through acquittal of the suspect in the face of plausible evidence. This he had not done by admitting the innocence of the prisoner before the charges against him were proven untrue.

The old spirit which had made the detective famous was whispering in his ears; but, despite its captivating and

stimulating promises, when his eyes again rested upon the face of the prisoner, there was a prompt return of hesitancy and doubt. Admittedly, in the young man before him, there was an element as yet wanting in the proper determination of its meaning, an element in the solution of which the detective was much undecided.

"You, then, do not choose to offer any account whatever of the incidents leading up to your present condition," said Mr. Eoff, entering some special memoranda in his much-worn manual of reference.

"In that," replied Edgar, "I am without the power of choice."

"A statement," pursued the detective, "that might be made to imply that you were unaware of the events preceding your arrival at this place, and in view of your present condition, no doubt, the only plea open to you that has the slightest promise of any consideration. That you committed murder the circumstances are such as to leave even the most incredulous without the faintest doubt, and that robbery was your motive the money found on your person, in itself, is proof of the most convincing nature. About you, young man, allow me to assure you that the coils are completely drawn. The proof is flawless."

Again the detective was checked by the changing countenance of the prisoner, again the expression as to the meaning of which Mr. Eoff was so much in doubt. Was it the expression of guilt? Was it the expression of innocence? Or was it neither?

"As the last opportunity to render some account of yourself, do you still prefer to pass it in silence?" Mr. Eoff finally inquired.

"In that I can only answer that I am without the power of choice," Edgar replied.

"Then I leave you to your fate," said the detective; and, turning from the cell, he took his departure with the same abruptness with which he had come,

CHAPTER XVII

THE SERMON

WHAT tidings spread with the rapidity of those freighted with curiosity? What moves humankind with the alacrity that he is moved by the curious? Duty, love, compassion, jealousy, rivalry, suspicion, anxiety, envy, hate, all incentives to action, all capable of stirring in the human breast forces to move, all finding a quick and positive response, all at seasons of a determining character; but in none of them perhaps is stored the universal power to move like curiosity in its many and varied degrees.

Curious were the people to hear what the Rev. Clark would have to say. Accordingly it was that, long before the hour for the regular services, despite the deep snow which everywhere spread its blanket of whiteness to unusual depths, and the biting cold of the wind that whistled round the corners and rushed through the streets, the pews and aisles of the great church were thronged and packed with a curious and expectant multitude gathered from all parts of the city. Men and women in regular attendance, men and women never before seen at a place of worship, men and women of wealth and affluence, men and women of poverty and indigence, men and women high in the city's social and economic life, men and women on the lowest strata of human existence, men and women of every class, kind, creed, doctrinal adherence, faith, or belief were there assembled, for in this world of men and women where the curious is promised there great numbers gather.

The fears of the good minister's wife concerning the mental state of her husband had been communicated to only a few close to the family and familiar with their domestic life, on the accepted condition that the confidence thus extended suffer no manner of abuse; but the

few so sharing her secret, in the changed habits and altered demeanor of their beloved pastor and cherished friend, soon saw reason to violate the confidence imposed, besides having likewise their own exclusive inner circle of confidants with whom any trust might be safely shared, and on promise thrice affirmed that it suffer no further betrayal. So that the manner in which the good minister's changed condition gained wide dissemination becomes not difficult to understand.

In brief, report had it that the Rev. Clark had lost, or was fast losing, his mind, which report diligently and enthusiastically circulated had served to fill, on this Sabbath morning, the great church to overflowing. Never before in that city had there gathered at the house of God such a multitude of people. Never before waited a throng in more breathless eagerness for a message, sacred or profane, from the lips of man. Motionless, as if stilled by the spell of the magician, each one sat in his seat.

From behind the altar presently issued the deep tones of the massive organ. They announced the hour at hand. A wave of intense expectancy rolled through the audience, stirring its members as if moved *en masse*. Every eye, in obedience to a common impulse, sought the pulpit entrance, every thought that had existence in the souls of the multitude gave way to one thought. The vast throng, not unlike an individual, halted in the calm of quiet expectation, hung upon the second, and the moment expanded until, seemingly, time had paused in its passage to await the issue.

At last, though, it passed, and into the pulpit the minister stepped. But eager as had been the waiting, not an eye rested upon him. For the time he had cast aside, as it were, his fascinating robes of attraction or shifted them to the frail form at his side. Not a single face in the great audience, as his glance swept the building, did he see directed toward his person, but, centered on the ragged

girl at his side, every countenance beamed the astonishment excited within.

The response exceeded by far the most sanguine expectations in which he had allowed himself to indulge. This was pleasing to him, and, that naught be lost for want of an advantageous station, he conducted the girl to the front of the pulpit. The mass of upturned faces seemed to frighten her. A tremor shook her half-starved, half-developed frame, and she asked that she be taken from their gaze.

"Quiet thy fears, my child," said the good minister. "To thee here no harm shall befall. Endure awhile their insatiable eyes, let them behold the fruits of their sowing, the harvest of their thoughtless and negligent existence."

At these words the sea of surprised and expectant faces turned from the girl to the good minister, and in their look of utter amazement he saw that the propitious moment had arrived.

Lifting then his strong voice that the most distant in the great gathering might easily hear, he continued: "Of what manner of men and women be ye to wonder thus at the results of your own iniquitous doings? Marvel not at the blighted form upon which you gaze. It is human, or at one time was human, possessed of human feelings, a human heart, a human mind, a life of God's own production wherein he implanted the seeds of honesty and integrity, of chastity and virtue, of love and affection, of efficacy and merit, of every human quality, when fully and completely matured, to make of her a creature befitting the divine purpose of her temporal existence and fulfilling the aim of the God who gave her physical being. Nay, question it not. The seeds implanted were of the right sort, their quality of the quality of God, the kind from which the angels grew, an unchangeable variety, and as pure when implanted in her being as if freshly gathered from the immaculate infinitudes of their holy origin. It was the white rose of chastity and virtue God implanted

in her tender soul, the red rose of love and affection in her young heart, the clinging vine of honesty and integrity in her impressive nature. Why, then, this blasted and blighted and tare-infested life at the period of bud and blossom? The answer is not found in the seed. God plants only the best in his garden of the human soul, but in the soil in which the seed find lodgment and the care that attends their growth and development is found the solution. Father, mother, the fair daughter at your side, the delight of your life, and in whom honesty, integrity, virtue, and all the qualities that make her human and elevate her to a plane approaching the highest of which this life is capable, under like conditions, must have been as this pitiful child. God did for one just what he did for the other, no more, no less; implanted he in them the same qualities, virtue of the purest, chastity unstained, honor befitting its divine inception. Otherwise it would be to acknowledge a biased Creator, a partial God. The same he gives to every life. The quality implanted is heavenly in kind, and hence it follows that in this there can be no difference. In her soul the making of an angel was left by the same hand that made the possibility of her physical existence in human form. In her nature similar qualities were instilled from which the saints of heaven grew. God did for her life just what he did for your life, what he does for every life—implanted in it the best there is in human nature, and, as in your life and in every life, the implantation over, the divine hand as a personal directing and controlling factor is withdrawn from the life, and it is left to the physical and mental laws of growth and development. In the starved and ragged girl before you, my friends, I tell you the right principles were implanted. They are innate to every normal life, belong by nature to every human being, and, if developed as God intended, will yield results that are pleasing in his sight. The fault is not found there. The seed were of the right sort. Why, then, I repeat it, this failure at the period of bud and blossom?

Father, mother, have you the answer? In the beginning this child was potentially good in every possible sense and application of the term, as every other life in its beginning is potentially good. We cannot regard sin as a part of a normally developed or developing human being. That would be to incorporate it within his nature, make it an innate characteristic, and accordingly place it beyond his control, since nature's laws are inexorable. You see, to make sin a part of the normal man is to make him sinful by nature, and natural tendencies he cannot change or evade. A normal man is not a sinful man. Sin comes into a life as the result or effect of some abnormality; and if we are to keep sin out of the life, we must keep abnormality out of the life. This great and far-reaching truth we are taught throughout all nature. The fruit-bearing plants yield fruits that are perfect only when their growth and development have been in every way normal. The florist, if he is to gather flowers in beauty and perfection befitting their nature, must keep the life of the plant in a normal condition. Perfection in the product grown can alone be had through a normal growth; and this principle applies, with the same determining force in plant, animal, or man. From the garden untended and the pig unfed, though the soil were the most fertile and the swine of the best breed, we expect nothing. Why not, then, extend the same fairness and consideration to this starved and naked girl? It requires only a knowledge of her past existence to understand why she has not developed in physical comeliness and beauty, in mental excellence and perfection. Her life has been one continuous struggle to appease the demands of a nature she has not been able to satisfy. *More, more, more* of the coarse bread of sustenance her sense of hunger has ever cried. Cold and work and starvation, with possibly a parental heritage impossible to normal growth, and yet, in the face of this and above it all, she is expected to rise. My friends, it cannot be. Such is not possible. It is contrary

to the laws of growth and development; like powers in nature are nowhere shown, an absolute impossibility, and an injustice to the life of the child for which there is no atonement, since into her very structural and functional being abnormality has grown. You say it is sin. The world calls it sin; but if sin, my friends, it is your sin, it is my sin, it is the sin of this Church, it is the sin of every other Church, the crowning sin of all mankind. *A sin?* My God of high heaven, is there another one in all hell that equals it? The sin of humanity forced to an abnormal growth and made an easy prey to disease and all the other imperfections and frailties of the body and mind for the lack of food and warmth and shelter and the other essentials to normal life, and then derided and despised and shunned and punished because of it! Yes, the sin that feeds our jails, fills our reformatories, crowds our asylums, throngs our prisons, and scoffs at our religion, and you and I are the sinners. We are the perpetrators. Upon our guilty heads falls the unpardonable guilt. What need we here assembled, some of us in costly array and costlier absurdities, to pray on bended knees to the God of heaven that the satanic influences be removed from the lives of such children, and that their feet be directed in the ways of righteousness, when starvation and the tasks to which they are forced are impoverishing their very life blood and denying them the inherent rights of normal growth? As well might we pray that God make wholesome the shrunken, shriveled, rot-infested, and bitter fruits of the garden, overrun with briars and weeds and other impediments to a growth in keeping with nature's aims. How can we hope to keep sin out of the life of the child when we are actually growing abnormality into its very physical and mental being? My friends, it simply cannot be done. The defect or sin becomes ingrown, and for such there is no relief in prayer and song and sermon. To serve such lives in an intelligent and effective way is to give to them the essentials to normal growth, and in no other way can re-

sults be had. No doubt, my friends, it would be more fitting to cease to call it sin. The term in no way is expressive of the real fundamental principles involved; in fact, is a cruel misnomer and serves to lead us away from the true causative factors in the removal of which alone can we hope for success. Let us not think of it as sin in the life, but abnormality; and, thinking thus, we will be all the better prepared to meet it in a sane and intelligent way. Ah! my friends, in the past I have mistaken the effect for the cause, the wound for the weapon. It is not for the sin in a life we should look, but for the abnormality, structural or functional, which is deeper seated, and which in most, or perhaps all, instances is the uncontrollable cause of the sin. Must we ever be reminded that humanity comes to the stage, not age. It is a matter of the degree of development and not one of the passage of years of accountability alone through the process of growth; or, more familiarly expressed, a child is a child, despite all powers and influences to the contrary, until he has grown not to be a child. But does he always develop as nature intended he should? Can he do it regardless of the conditions of his material birth which often start him on the road of life the inborn victim of some loathsome and devitalizing disease which distorts and deforms his physical and mental organs and spreads decay and degeneration and rot where should be health and vigor and normal growth? Can he do it when the food he must eat is devoid of the nutritive elements set by nature as indispensable to the proper development of the different parts of his body and mind? I must answer: You, and all animate nature in which our finite conceptions find the most tangible manifestations of an infinite God, confirm and verify the answer: he cannot. Pray for this starved and ragged girl? As well might we pray that God change his laws governing the growth and nutrition of her body, ask him to give us a progeny uninfluenced by cold and starvation and other hindering influences that may beset their lives; in brief,

give us an offspring for the kind of which, to their youthful years, the violation of the laws of growth and development can make no difference, for of the saneness of the one of less amount could not be found in the other. The indispensable need in this child's life is not prayer, and, as thoughtful, intelligent men and women, if we have nothing else to offer, in God's name let us make no offer at all, since the proffer of prayer in her behalf must be a taunting mockery to so-called religion, and to God himself a poignant insult. It is material, not spiritual, aid that she needs, and by material aid alone can such lives be reclaimed. Her deficiency is not the deficiency of sin, but the imperfect and cheated efforts of nature at normal growth. And here, my friends, is the real battle field for Christian achievement. Here it is that sin (sin only in name, the true underlying condition or causative factor, an imperfect or perverted growth, the result of disease, insufficient food, or some other of the many impediments to the normal development of the child life) has found its impregnable strongholds against which our efforts hitherto have proved in vain, and against which all future efforts, if similarly directed, must fail. If we are to save such lives, we must do it by securing for them a normal growth. To abnormals grown, it then is too late. The opportunity is past. The mischief is done, and in many instances done to the extent that it cannot be undone. Would we serve this child, then lift her from the environs in the midst of which a blossoming seraph of heaven must wither and pale and sink to a corresponding plane of physical imperfection, of mental inadequacy. It is the want of material, not spiritual, aid that has ruined her life. It is material, not spiritual, assistance that she needs. She has been refused the very rights of normal growth. The good that God implanted in her life has not had an opportunity to develop. Her fault is a failure in growth and not one of conventional sin, and the remedy is to correct the growth. In her ranks, to abnormals matured, so-called sin finds a

safe retreat against all of our efforts. Ingrown, it cannot be dislodged from the life, and to attempt it is to attempt the impossible. It becomes a part of their nature. If we are to lend them our aid, we must care for their growth. It is from her ranks that the defaulter, the delinquent, the malfactor, the criminal, the debauchee, the libertine, the convict come, and we should expect it. The grown product *must* show the fault in the growth—an inevitable consequence, a basic, a fundamental truth that is undeniable. My God, how inexpressibly awful it is! Actually grown for the chain gang, the prisoner's cage, the criminal's cell, it is but natural that they fall into their place, as natural as for the withered and blasted and rot-infested fruit, before the season of harvest, to release its hold on the bough and fall to the soil beneath. The victims of conditions and circumstances out of or above which it is not possible for them to rise, and yet, do we not give to it a tolerance? Yes, in fairness to our appreciation of their condition, I am forced to admit that we have even deigned them further notice. We have built for them jails and prisons and penitentiaries wherein their welfare is sedulously guarded and in which an angel would be quickly transformed into a demon. Would we serve such lives? Then we must lift them bodily from the undercurrents the superimposed weight of which is crushing them down. Other service rendered can be of no aid. It is food that has the power to hush the cry of hunger. It is warmth that drives out the chill of cold. It is rest that relieves the weary hand of toil. It is shelter that keeps out the rain. It is material, not spiritual, aid that must reach them first. Would this Church serve such lives? Then to their aid it must go before their growth is ruined. Trampled beneath the unfeeling feet of society, kicked and cursed and bruised and crushed and starved, their very nature, through a process of perverted or abnormal growth, becomes the permanent seat of ingrown change. They see, they think, they feel as perverted organs must see and think and feel,

for organs other than the perverted they have not. Pray for the restoration of such abnormalities grown? The absurdity of the very thought is sickening to an intelligence of normal conceptions; and, as Christian men and women, to attempt to right their wrongs through our wont of ceremonious worship is to merit the scoffs and jeers and contemptuous ridicule such efforts must always bring and to hold in place thereby an insuperable barrier to the progress of religious thought. Their wrongs are physical wrongs. Their deficiencies are physical deficiencies. Their defects, in the main, are defects in growth, or the devastation of disease. Their downward fall is through physical channels. Their imperfections are physical imperfections, and their so-called sins are the blasted fruits of the thwarted and choked and throttled and strangled endeavors of a growth that never attains the normal. Physically defective, mentally deficient, as you and I or any other individual similarly placed would be, the victims of surroundings and circumstances the most damnable, the sin and guilt and criminality in their lives is no less a natural result than is the scentless and faded flower rooted in the sands of a barren waste. Abnormality in growth means abnormality in the product grown. God's universal law, applicable to all life, but do we always think of it in that way? Its presence is not ignored in the fatted calf or pig. Of the fundamental law the botanist or agriculturist is not unmindful. In all life its recognition gains easy and willing admittance until that of the child is reached. Here it is treated as if the principle suddenly ceased to be effective. In the life of the starved and ragged and neglected boy or girl of our streets, it must make no difference. To the years of discretion, he or she must rise supreme above it. Little or no notice does it receive in our civic requirements, in our moral and religious life. O God, wherein could civilized man more forcefully show the obtuseness of his sense of justice? "

Turning then to the girl and taking her hand in his own,

the good minister concluded: "A blasted and blighted flower, rooted in a soil barren and nonproductive, defrauded and cheated and robbed of the rights of normal growth, it is only natural that thy blossom is wanting in the hues and fragrance of thy species more favorably grown, for in the mildew moisture, pale sunshine, impure air, and impoverished soil of thy surroundings tints of perfection and perfumes of quality could not develop. The fault, though, is not thy fault. God Almighty himself, in the physical form of flesh of thy flesh and bone of thy bone and of thy environs, improvement over thy present condition could not show."

Thus ending, the good minister led the little girl from the pulpit, leaving the great audience, if possible, in greater silence than he had found it.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SCARS

ANOTHER day was approaching its close. Another chill winter night was settling down upon the high Asylum building to send its frigid and winding sheets of darkness, of blackness into every corner and passage and angle and hall and chamber of that human jail of human madness. The eternal discord and strife and confusion and contention of day was giving way to the eternal discord and strife and confusion and contention of night, the innumerable delusions of light fading and passing into the more hideous and grotesque fantasies and illusions of darkness. Everywhere was stir and commotion and disorder and noise, with the one exception of the sick chambers below. Here, for the time, all was orderly, peaceful, quiet.

"Resting, sleeping still," whispered Miss Osburn as she approached the bedside of the ill physician. "A token it must be of the exhausted condition of his physical forces or else a period of prolonged rest that bespeaks a more favorable course in his illness."

She noted carefully the condition of his pulse. "Not so rapid, improved in quality. Could it be that this is the crisis and that there will soon be a turn for the better?"

In such a likelihood was the reminder that, if she should succeed in her purpose, there must be no further delay. During the doctor's near and momentarily expected death for the past few days, she had waited, waited, but to wait further now might mean to invite new difficulties, might mean to invite even the impossible, or, the purpose later accomplished, the delay in itself to lead to the defeat of the end it was meant to serve.

"Sleep, prolonged, restful," she thought, counting again the sick man's pulse and noting more closely its improved qualities. "The sleep that can only mean a

favorable turn in his illness and the sleep, in the awakening from which, my last opportunity might pass. This night it must be done. This night the scars that threaten the life of Edgar must be implanted upon the inmate of Room No. 879. This night I will attempt it. This night I will do it. This night—to-morrow—the future—”

Changed thus from a tender, gentle, and considerate being to one ruled by a purpose, the sincere and bitter repentance of the recent acts that had well-nigh cost the physician his life were forgotten in a moment. She had hoped, she had prayed that, by some favoring incident, it might not again become necessary to throw like dangers in the way of the ill physician, but now such hope, such prayers were completely dissolved.

“This night,” she repeated. “It must be done this night. To-morrow must see the threatening marks irremovably set upon the present occupant of Room No. 879.”

This night she would attempt it, she would do it, and to-morrow—the future. She again examined the pulse of the sleeping physician, held him a few seconds in the deepest regard.

“Dare I trust him to this natural sleep?” she said to herself, but receding a step from the bedside in the fear that the peacefully slumbering man might, in some way, hear and understand her very secret thoughts. “Dare I leave him as he is? Dare I confide in his chance awakening, or must I again bring to my aid means less likely of disappointing results? Prudence speaks only in favor of the latter. To make sure of safety is to diligently avoid all uncertainty. To this, his natural sleep, I dare not—”

Shrieks, screams from the overhead chambers checked her. Pale, trembling, she stood listening to the gathering storm. It was not new to her. For weeks, for months, with short intervals of relief, she had heard it day and night, but never before had it fallen upon her ears with such a meaning; never before had it carried such a message

of dread, such a load of fear to her heart; never before had it struck upon her soul with such terror-laden significance.

"Must my courage in this fail me?" she said to herself when the outbreak of madness grew less severe. "Must I abandon it? must I surrender? must I give it up? must I leave it as it is?"

"To find the perilous way to his room; to face him in his wild, his frantic madness; to coax or force him into submission; to successfully implant the identifying scars on his person; to keep it all a secret. Is it a task that comes within my power? Have I the physical strength, the courage? Can it be done, or is it only a mad belief that prompts me to such a course, a compelling desire impossible of realization?"

These some of the questions that rapidly ran through her mind; some of the thoughts that crowded, that teemed in her soul. Coldly perspiring, violently trembling, she staggered to a seat by the window.

"Am I to relinquish all?" she presently asked herself. "Am I, must I abandon Edgar to his fate? To make my way to his room, to coax or force him into submission, is it possible? can I do it? These questions God will answer for me."

Bending then low upon her knees, the girl, in silent prayer to Heaven, asked for guidance. The result was decisive. In prompt determination, she arose to her feet and, with unseemingly haste, but surprising quickness, procured the needle and charged it with the powerful narcotic.

"Your medicine," she said, in her usual tones, as in the final preparation for its administration the physician, in part aroused from his slumbers, but falling again quickly into the restful sleep, he was barely conscious of the needle thrust that sent the opiate deep into his flesh.

"Not by desire, not by preference, not by choice," thought Miss Osburn, waiting yet at the bedside, the empty needle in her hand as she had withdrawn it, "but by the stern decree of circumstance that finds me without

an alternative. It is my fervent prayer that in the drug your restful sleep be prolonged and that no ill results may have their origin in its use."

Arranging then the sick room with the greatest care and precision, the immediate door of entrance she locked and through an adjoining chamber reached a hallway rarely used at that time of night.

"Good! Deserted, as I had expected. No one here to spy upon me," she said half aloud as she hurried along its dark course, the end of which brought her to a part of the building less favorable to her secret mission, but this she quickly passed unnoticed and so on, by way of stairs and turn and corner, every one of which was distinctly outlined in her mind, until the door of Room No. 879 was reached.

As before, the key was in readiness, and to it the bolt yielded in easy compliance, a second turn of which found her again locked within the mad cell.

"A visit I had not expected," said the inmate, indicating some of the surprise he felt, both in the manner of his speech and the expression on his yet youthful and well-formed features, "but, withal, one not specially ill-timed, since to bear witness is to believe with greater ease. This way, if you please." He took her gently by the arm, drew her to one side and a step in advance. "You will observe," he said, "they fall aslant, each beam in succession increasing or diminishing in length, as measured from right or left, the intervening diamonds with their transverse markings of a corresponding regularity, but on an inverse order, the same always in their relative position one to another, diamond to bar and bar to diamond and yet, as a whole, constantly undergoing some marked change. There! there! See! see! Is it not so?" The inmate eagerly pointed to the floor, where the moonlight, released at that moment by a passing cloud and streaming through the high and close-barred window, fell in divided and broken beams at Miss Osburn's feet. "Al-

ways the same, changing, but never changed," he continued, pointing to each part of the reflection as in interested and systematic detail the light and dark areas, in turn, received his most careful attention. "Here the diamonds, there the bars; or there the diamonds and here the bars; large or small, light or dark, straight or aslant, shifting back and forth; but in their relative size and position always the same."

"And always interesting and instructive," ventured Miss Osburn, when the inmate had apparently finished.

"Yes, yes; true, true; always interesting, always instructive," repeated the inmate, his face beaming with the innocent delight of a child. "Yes, yes; true, true; always interesting in that it is ever changing, but never changed; always instructive in that, to us, there is a lesson of divine significance. See! see!" he exclaimed, seizing her by the hand and drawing her close to the window, "the golden beams come direct from heaven, and surely none but the hand of a God to fashion such a scene."

Side by side the two looked out of that high lone window, looked out upon the magic, the matchless beauty of that wild winter night.

"Indeed, a lesson of divine significance. Indeed, to fashion such a scene, none but the hand of a God," thought Miss Osburn, as, transfixed to the spot and for the moment wholly unmindful of the presence in which she stood, her eyes sought to follow the shifting panorama of cloud and moon and light as sheets and sheaths and bundles and bolts of soft and mellowed rays gamboled and danced and shivered and shimmered through the chill air of the winter night, each separate beam radiant with the matchless luster of its own splintered brightness and reflecting every shade and shadow and tint and hue of the cloud-rifted skies through which, in myriad number, they poured to beat and break and fall upon the one barred window of that mad prison cell. "Indeed, a lesson of divine significance; indeed, a scene only for the hands of a God." But she

thought of her purpose. "An opportunity set by nature, ordained of heaven," she said to herself, when she noted in what deep and complete abstraction the inmate stood.

The moment of all moments. Her hand sought her bosom, found the needle there in readiness concealed. "Beautiful! beautiful!" she exclaimed, as, with one quick move, its contents were thrust into his arm.

Startled, the inmate turned from the window. He fixed his eyes full upon her, and by the light of the moonbeams she could read in his countenance some of the strange surprise he felt.

"Why, something must have disturbed you," she said, thoughtful to use the tones in which she was accustomed to speak to the inmates, and in which probably was the secret of her unusual and wonderful success in their proper control. "Have you grown weary of the clouds and moonbeams, or is it some discomfort that draws you away from a scene so full of interest and beauty? Come, come," she added in tones more persuasive; "if I am to assist you, must you not first confide in me your displeasure?"

She had withdrawn from the window to a distance where its reflections, tinted and retinted as only falls to such rare nights in nature, could but partially reach her, but moving now a step in advance, she stood within its center, the streaming sheaths and bundles and bolts of broken and reflected light showering full upon her beautiful and animated form, to fall in seeming reluctance, but in sparkling and disordered heaps, at her feet.

If in the scene without, with its wavering and unsteady vicissitudes of sheen and splendor and moon and cloud and sky, the inmate had seen that which had held his perverted faculties in a temporary state of abstraction, is it any wonder that now, face to face with the added fascinations of her exceptional womanly attractions, heightened, if possible, by her seeming moon-woven robes of reflected light, the inmate, in the eternal unsolved mystery of his own distraught mind, gazed upon her in unutterable awe?

"Will you not share with me your displeasure? Will you not accept my proffered aid? Will you not, can you not confide in me?" she appealingly asked, anxious, uncertain of his rapidly changing countenance; anxious, uncertain, fearful of the steady, penetrating look that seemed to pierce her through and through.

"Nay," said the inmate, releasing his eyes from her statuelike form, so still did she stand, to allow them to wander to the window, then back again, to fix her as before in their steady hold. "Nay, nay, not to share with thee in all thou askest; not to confide in thee even to the dearest, the most sacred secrets of the heart, it would appear to reject the trust of an angel, for of thy subtle, thy resistless presence, in every part of my being I am strangely aware. Upon me it steals with the influence of an unfamiliar but soothing and quieting portion; the effect as if soon to compose me into a deep and restful sleep."

"Thank God! thank God! the opiate, the opiate," thought Miss Osburn.

"Confide in thee"—the words of the inmate grew more difficult of utterance. "Submit to—thy—keep-ing the innermost desires—and longings—of—the—heart. Share with—thee—the—most—sacred secrets of the soul. Surrender—into—thy—hands the—very—keys of—life—itself. By virtue of thy resistless power, is it not thine to take; thine at thy bidding; aye, thine without the asking?" The light grew dim, dimmer, went out in total darkness. "What?" exclaimed the inmate, after some moments of oppressive silence. "What? to all disappear as if some fleeting shadow, to pass as the passing of a deluded hope. What? some possible legerdemain, some trick to befool me! What? To all vanish with the false vapors of some damned, some hell-bidden conjurer! *What?*"

Again the moonbeams broke through the window to enwrap, in their newly gathered splendor, the waiting woman, though only for an instant, then to go out with

the same fitful haste with which they had come, but in that hurried gleam Miss Osburn had seen the lowering clouds of madness gathering in the face of the inmate. When or how the storm would break she knew not, but that it was coming she felt now that there could be little doubt. Would she remain the object of his fury, intensified perhaps many fold by the effects of the opiate, which, by this time, must be mixing its strange, its inexplicable sensations with the feelings of a far more perplexing nature excited by the over-stimulated state of his perverted mind, or would she seek to flee his awful presence in the hope of a safer return and the final accomplishment of her purpose when the drug, in its fuller powers, had reduced him to a degree of physical helplessness safe even to hands weaker than her own?

She decided upon the latter and turned, key in hand, to the door, but the decision had come too late.

"Angel of light or enchantress of darkness," exclaimed the inmate, advancing madly toward her, "thinkest thou to work upon my imagination with thy hell-begotten charms; to benumb my reason with thy infernal spells; to deaden my sensibilities with thy accursed, thy diabolical incantations; to dazzle and blind my eyes with the passing splendors of thy false beauty; to enthrall me utterly in thy magic witchery?" Again the momentary burst of moonlight from the cloud-rifted heavens. "Ha! ha! and in that thou dost invite thine own retribution. Ha! ha! and in that thy enchanting splendors become the torchbearers of thine own destruction."

His hand was upraised, and with all the frenzy and force of his mad-ruled mind the blow descended. But crouching low upon the floor, its fearful energy was all expended upon the insensible walls above her head.

"Can it be so?" the inmate presently said, the mad ring in his voice replaced by tones of a milder and more deliberate nature. "Can it really be so? Here but this moment. Here yet in her resistless, her bewitching in-

fluence. Here yet to steal away my faculties in a strange, in an overpowering stupor, to consume me in a subtle but irresistible sleep! Here yet in her matchless, maddening charms, though bodily dissolved or hidden to my senses! Sleep—sleep—resistless—all-powerful—all-consuming sleep. The eyelids drooping, heavy, the sensibilities one and all gradually but surely releasing their hold, gone with the passing of the light, gone with the fading of the halo of splendor in which she stood, bodily dissolved or hidden, but here—yet—in—her—magic—sp—”

He turned to stagger in the direction of the window, attracted to which, perhaps, by a few feeble moonbeams that were struggling for entrance, but unable to further resist the now rapidly deepening influence of the powerful drug, sank in physical relaxation, mental inaction, a helpless, a harmless mass, to the floor, the few scattered and feeble moonbeams to linger yet a moment upon his upturned face, then to go out in complete and utter darkness. Sleep, sleep, resistless, all-powerful, all-consuming sleep. The charm had dissolved, the spell had lost its magic power, the halo of light with all its attendant splendors had been effectively curtained from his soul. Enchantment now wrought her wondrous web in vain. Sleep, sleep. Even to the mad mind sleep must bring its hour of relief, its period of forgetfulness, its time of rest.

“At last, at last, thank Heaven! thank Heaven!” whispered Miss Osburn as she listened to the noisy and irregular breathing of the inmate, in the guttural and stertorous sounds of which, to her, was a message of the final mastery of the drug. “Thank Heaven! thank Heaven! at last, at last it has done its work. I had feared, I had almost begun to believe that even the powerful narcotic was going to fail to bring sleep to his excited, his perverted mind, to bring relief, to bring peace to his incensed, his tormented soul. But true, true to my purpose, in that now the last fear has been removed, the last doubt

robbed of its questionable, its uncertain qualities. Thank Heaven! thank Heaven! at last, at last it has done its work. At last he has been made to yield to its wonderful, its powerful demands. At last, though the maddest of the mad, rendered even submissive to my hands."

She arose to her feet, at the same instant a bright burst of light illuminating the mad cell, and stood a few moments gazing into his calm and relaxed features.

"Can—it—be—so?" he incoherently murmured. "Here—this moment; here yet—in—her—resistless her—bewitching—influence. Can—it—be—so? Not—to—share—with—thee—even—to—the—dearest—secret"—

"Nay, speak not of thy trust," she said, bringing her handkerchief dripping with chloroform close to his nose. "Nay, nay, little now it can matter in whom it is placed, for in this, thy confidings, thy hopes, thy misgivings, thy fears, all the realities, all the false imaginings of thy confused, thy mad-ruled mind, all of the spurious speculations, the distorted creations of thy tortured, thy exasperated soul are brought to one common altar of peace and harmony."

"Sleep — resistless — all - powerful — all-consuming — sleep," brokenly murmured the inmate. "Yes—sleep—resistless," she continued, "sleep, all-powerful, all-consuming, but not the sleep of nature in that there is a voluntary cessation of the mind from activity to repose; not the sleep of nature in that it may be mixed with dream-infested scenes of pleasure or horror; but the sleep perhaps more nearly approaching the final dissolution of the body. the sleep in which somatic death itself finds its keenest rival. All the senses benumbed, beclouded, confused, fading, failing, first lost to their surroundings, then losing themselves one to another in the increasing, the deepening gloom, drifting farther and farther apart, farther and farther away, going out one by one until the last is lost in a boundless echoless void. Fast asleep, deeply unconscious, dead to all suffering, now he cannot feel it."

But a few moments thereafter, and both the burn and the wound that were to heal into the identifying marks were implanted upon the body of the unconscious inmate.

"Done," she said when she had cleared the room of the last trace of the deed. "Done, done; he to bear the threatening marks, he to wear the identifying scars. Done, the deed is done. But what of the awakening?" In this thought she stood, looking into the peaceful face of the unconscious inmate, looking at his half-parted lips, upon which there played the first feeble evidence of a pleasing smile. Tears filled her eyes. "How inexpressibly strange to his perverted faculties must be the return to a conscious knowledge of his physical injuries!" she said half aloud. "With what utter confusion, with what unthinkable dismay, with what unimagined consternation their presence, their pain must fill his disordered mind! How truly mysterious—"

"Not—to—share—with—thee—in—all—thou—ask—est—not—to—confide—in—thee—even—to—the—dearest—secret—of—the—heart—it—would—appear," the inmate brokenly murmured.

"To reject the trust of an angel," she softly added.

"Yes—yes—true—true," his incoherent words ran on, "interesting in—that—it—is—ever—changing—but—never—changed; instructive in—that—to—us—there—is—a—lesson—of—divine—significance. See—see—the—golden—beams—come—direct—from—heaven—and—surely—none—but—the—hand—of—a—God—to—fashion—such—a—scene."

She knew that the drugs were dying; that his senses were reviving; that his faculties must quickly awaken to some manner of realization of what had happened; that he must soon feel the discomfort of his wounds. How would he receive it? The strangely dying effects of the drugs, in what manner would it appeal to his awakening knowledge? The increasing pain incident to his physical

injuries, with what patience, with what endurance would he bear it? Reviving more and more.

"You see, they fall aslant," he said in phrase more easily spoken. "Here the diamonds, there the bars; or there the diamonds, and here the bars. Large or small, light or dark; changing ever, but never changed."

The effect of the drug now swiftly passing, in a few more moments his reviving senses to reach the conscious stage. While there was yet time, would she make safe her escape? or would she remain to see in what manner the presence, the pain of his newly inflicted wounds were to appeal to his reviving consciousness?

She stole to the door and set the key in readiness for instant flight.

"What means this dull, this heavy lethargic stupor?" said the inmate, lifting himself from the floor, in which act he experienced the first discomfort of his physical injuries as manifestly shown in the frown of pain that marked his brow. "Why this vague, this uncertain, this indefinite, this dream-like state of the mind in which there is mixed a positive sense of suffering? Why this strange awakening from a sleep that seems to have been even more strange; this heavy, deadened, loaded state of the feelings, benumbed, sluggish, befogged, beclouded, this return as it were from the lost, the unknown, this unaccountable, incredible vagueness, yet in it and with it and through it all the ever-growing, the ever-strengthening sense of suffering, the ever-conscious and increasing realization of pain?"

In the instant a burst of moonbeams flooded the chamber. "Ah! be there even more strangeness in this," continued the inmate, removing his shoe and carefully, critically inspecting the blood-stained wound on his foot. "In this," he exclaimed, "not the lingering, the thinning shadows of a dream-broken sleep; not the border line phantoms of the mind between consciousness and unconsciousness for the moment poised; not the product

of the fancy, though befooled at its own cunning; not the creations of the distraught mind, however wild, however mad, but the touch of a material hand; or, if wanting in that, of supernatural—”

Flashes of moonlight filled the chamber, faded, brightened once more, faded again, and so on in alternating but rapid waves of decreasing progression and increasing recession until finally was mirrored upon the window that which appeared to the inmate's excited and perverted faculties as a fading cross of light.

“I the crucified Christ,” he said, the new delusion at once assuming despotic sway in his mind. “I the Son of God who died to redeem a lost and ruined world; the Saviour sent to enlighten, to free benighted and sin-fettered man. These the material injuries of my physical death upon the cross; the nail wounds wherewith my feet were affixed to its beam; the tortures of the flesh incident to the cruel crucifixion; the marks, blood-smeared, blood-stained, of my divine, my holy nature; *I the crucified Christ!*”

He had arisen to his feet and, following the receding rays, stood now at the window, drinking in the splendors of cloud and moon and light in every tint and hue and tinge and reflection of which, to his deluded, his perverted sight, was a reverential token of his immaculate, his godly nature.

“I the crucified Christ,” he repeated, “of whom these beauties, though matchless in themselves; of whom these wonders, though marvelous in their creative, their formative activities, to even make and to bedeck a new heaven—are but the feeblest reflections of the infinitudes of my all-powerful and divine nature.”

How urgent, how convincing, how real the delusion! The crucified Christ, the son of God, born of the virgin Mary, his mission the redemption, the salvation of the world. He turned from the window, his eyes to sweep the mad prison cell and to rest finally upon the nurse waiting still at the unopened door. One glance at his altered

features told her the tale of the delusional change; showed her the wonderful transformation the few moments had brought. Thoughtful, gentle, tender, compassionate, tranquil of expression, a complacent innocence, a considerate regard almost painful to behold.

"Peace unto thee," he said, readily detecting her deep but well-concealed agitation. "Peace, peace unto thy confused, thy anxious mind; unto thy restless, thy tormented soul, for, O daughter of the flesh, it is not that I come to chide thee, neither is it my purpose to show to thee thy weakness in the display of thy faults. The demands of the physical are oftentimes many and imperiously urgent, the powers of resistance frequently few and essentially weak. Besides, temptation frequently holds at his command forces impossible to resist, or if uncertain, or fearful of the battle in the open, by ways less direct is skilled in the retreat to his impregnable fortress. Be it, therefore, not so much my mission to deprecate the evil, but to point to thee the ways where the evil is not. Judge ye warily of the acts and deeds of man, for the calm and untroubled waters that make up the terminus of the stream speak not of the dizzy swirls, the mad and dashing cataracts, the cruel and immovable bowlders that mark the course of the channel leading back to their source. These wounds," the inmate began to unfasten his garments, "though now painful in the physical cruelties that beset the flesh, are, nevertheless, the marks of my death upon the cross."

Here Miss Osburn recognized a new difficulty. In the inmate's eagerness to speak of, to reveal his wounds, a real and threatening danger. He must be made to hold them in the strictest secrecy, endure their suffering, their presence in unspoken silence.

"If inflicted upon the cross, then sacred wounds," she suggested, "and to be borne always with a silent endurance."

"Even so, even so," said the inmate, rearranging his

clothing with such care as to show with what force, with what readiness the intimated secrecy was received by his perverted mind. "Even so, even so. It is true, it is true, inflicted upon the cross, sacred wounds, and to be borne always with a sacred silence." "Crucified in life," he continued reflectively, "dead upon the cross, three days consigned to the seclusion of the tomb, three days of the unbroken silence of the grave, three days of the hidden secrets of death, three days of the mysteries of that spirit life beyond. Aye! sacred wounds, indeed, and to be borne always with a sacred, silent endurance."

The fervency with which the inmate uttered these words, and the strong but complacent expression of fidelity that marked his features, told her with what unquestioned, with what absolute authority the new delusion held sway in his mind; told her as in no other way it would have been possible to have carried to her confidence the same amount of assurance. Dead upon the cross; three days consigned to the seclusion of the tomb; three days of the unbroken silence of the grave; three days of the hidden secrets of death; three days of the mysteries of that spirit land beyond. She felt, she knew that he believed it with all the earnestness, with all of the sincerity of his mad-ruled soul; with all of the force, with all of the power of his distraught mind. Sacred wounds, indeed, and to be borne always with a sacred, with a silent endurance.

That difficulty had been satisfactorily overcome. In that she felt, she knew, that she could safely trust him, trust him until the delusion was gone. The crucified Christ! What wonderful, what unthinkable sensations it must stimulate in his soul! How inconceivable the feelings, the fears, the hopes it must awaken in his mind! This thought filled her heart with a strange sadness, with a startling, with an unfamiliar fear. She had the feeling as if in reality she stood within the presence of some divine and all-powerful agency. In the inmate's compassionate countenance, his tender, his sympathizing

face, an influence that moved her to a depth of conscience strangely stern, acutely painful; an influence that filled her with sensations she could not long hope to conceal.

She had accomplished her purpose. Why remain longer? She moved as if to go.

"Not yet, O daughter of the flesh," said the inmate, "not yet, not yet. To thee in thy present condition the gates of heaven are eternally closed. To thee as thou art, God—"

The clouds without, gathering in increasing depths, piling in thick, in prodigious heaps against the one lone window, until no beam of light, not even the feeblest ray, not even the faintest glimmer to penetrate that mad prison cell. She gently turned the key. She gently relocked the door, and as gently, a moment thereafter, the moonbeams reëntered, then filled and flooded the chamber, but look where he would, search as he did, she was nowhere to be found.

CHAPTER XIX

THE GOOD MINISTER'S BIBLE

PURSUING his thread of the physical, speculating, reasoning on its probabilities, its possibilities, the fixed, the unyielding laws by which the physical is, must be governed; thinking in material thoughts, calculating from material truths, each day, each week the good minister drifted farther and farther away from the immaterial or spiritual of his past life, each day, each week digging deeper and deeper into the material side of the human make-up and the influence such make-up must have in shaping, in determining the character of the daily life.

So recently an eager and confident student of the Bible, finding therein a ready and easy solution to all difficulties, a satisfactory answer to all troublesome questions, accepting with the faith of a child or passing it by with the thought, "it is God's will or purpose."

But now, to the good man, the Book of Holy Writ had become, or was fast becoming, a vast conglomeration of strange words and phrases which, when really thought of or analyzed, was, for the most part, of doubtful significance; or, if of unquestionable meaning, little harmonizing with man's true nature. Not that the good minister really sought cause to doubt his God, not that the moral and religious elements in his life had been rendered less assertive; but that through his newly accepted views of the supremacy of the physical there had been established in his mind entirely different standards by which to rightly estimate, to impartially judge his fellow beings. Yea, enthroned in the very soul of the devout minister was a new relationship of man to man and man to God, his Maker.

"Even granting the irrepressible powers of the physical," said Mrs. Clark, who had now few fears as to her

husband's mental condition, but who was painfully concerned at the radical turn his life had taken, "even accepting the fact that the individual is reduced to the laws of his material make-up, and laws of a nature from which there is no recourse; even admitting that the human will is no more than a desire or wish expressed, in many instances of which it is at any rate apparently so, the world, mankind, public sentiment, your Church to such materialistic views will not subscribe. Moreover," continued the wife in greater hesitancy, but determined to have her say, "to one in your position, the advocacy of such views must mean the sacrifice of the high regard in which you are held, the relinquishment of your enviable station, both as man and minister, for already in the mouths of some of your richest and most influential members there is the report of the whispers of disapproval. Yes, it might be added that already on the tongue of contumely your name is growing in favor."

"Worldly and worthless considerations," said the good minister, returning to a seat near his wife, "a claim in the courts of truth utterly devoid of merit. Am I to sacrifice my conceptions of right, my sense of duty, upon the base and commonplace altar of public opinion? Am I to barter honor in thought, candor in conscience, for the gracious remarks, the laudatory comments of those in the lives and thoughts of whom honor in action, candor in thought are made use of only as a favoring agency to some individual or selfish end? Am I to treat with profound silence the very fundamental and God-given principles of human life for the reason alone that to mention or discuss such principles happens not to meet with the general approbation, the hearty approval of some of those to whom my sermons are addressed? Am I to avoid, shun the great and determining physiologic laws of humankind, the fulfillment or nonfulfillment of which is to make or mar the existence of the individual, for no other reason than that it is likely to incur the ill regard of popular sentiment

and render my own name a target for the thoughtless and oftentimes ignorant tongue of disparaging comment? Am I to evade, dodge the truth for the specific reason that the world, mankind, public sentiment, the Church to such a truth will not subscribe?"

The good minister arose to his feet, lifting his superb manhood to the full limits of its splendid physical proportions, in his mien and motion not the tension and expansiveness of insulted and defiant feelings, but the more ennobling expressions of that strength of conviction that dares not countenance even the slightest insincerity with itself.

"No, no, good wife," he exclaimed, "counsel not in behalf of the gracious opinions, the favored comments of the world, of the Church, when to have and to hold them is to do so at the abandonment of truth, at the sacrifice of honor, at the very death and destruction of one's own soul sincerity. No, no, good wife, counsel not that I shun and avoid certain truths when to do so is to screen them about with the robes of my own self-conscious hypocrisy. No, no, good wife; though sweet, though bitter to my soul, deny me not the privilege of full sincerity with myself. No, no; though sweet, though bitter to my soul, leave me free in the performance of duty as to me it is presented by a candid and God-fearing conscience. Ask me not to submit to an amicable compromise with injustice, with the erroneous and ignorant opinions of mankind because of any personal disfavor it may bring. Ask me not to compress my lips in silent tolerance of sinister and pernicious evils for the reason that it so chances that the rich and powerful in society, in the Churches, prefer not to hear such evils mentioned."

The good minister called for Effie, who tremblingly, bashfully entered the room.

"Ask me not to pass unmentioned the sad and grossly injured condition of such children because, to the gaudy

and pompous, their menial and blasted lives are intolerantly repulsive. Ask me not—”

“Pardon the interruption,” said Mrs. Clark. “It was not so much in the spirit of asking you to *do* or to leave *undone*—though considerations of prime importance in your continued success as a popular minister, as an honored member of society—but for the more particular purpose of making known to you with what regard your newly acquired and extremely materialistic views are being received by the public in general, by the Church in particular.”

“The public in general, the Church in particular?” echoed the good minister. “*Aye, the Church in particular,*” he repeated, his brow wrinkled into a thoughtful mood, an uncertain expression. “The Church in particular. And who is it that, caring to simulate the life of Christ, to follow in his footsteps, to teach as he taught, to preach as he preached, can hope to long retain the Church’s favor? *Aye, the Church in particular.* And who is it that—”

The stinging censure that was moving in the thoughts of the good minister and that was on the verge of breaking out in the most caustic terms of criticism and condemnation, by a wistful look from his wife, was changed into expressions of a milder nature, yet of a character to revive in her mind the possibility still of his mental impairment.

“The Church, and what thy displeasure with the Church?” she asked, his disconnected phrases and half-finished sentences revealing an inward state of dissatisfaction without mentioning any special grievance.

“My dissatisfaction with the Church,” the good minister replied, endeavoring to guard as best he could the vehement outburst of his thought, “in many, in most respects, the counterpart of my own misdirected and unfruitful life; in many, in most of its efforts, an utter failure because of its disregard of man’s material nature; teaching, preaching, urging upon him that which is impossible to his

physical existence; teaching, preaching, urging upon him that which, in some instances—"

He turned to face his wife. "Dare I say it? Dare I finish the sentence? Dare I utter the thoughts? Dare I give voice to the words?"

"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil; for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh," quoted the wife in answer.

"Luke 6: 45," said the good minister, resuming his wonted promenade of the study when his mind was intently engaged. "Evil from where there is evil; good from where there is good; the fruit to correspond with the tree; the deeds, the acts, the thoughts, the conceptions, the beliefs, the sense of right and wrong determined by the condition of the material agencies within; truly applicable to the laws of man's physical nature; written in accord with the innate principles of his material self; to that extent good, to that extent in full harmony with man's material tendencies, with man's inborn characteristics; good to that extent."

"But what manner of reply have you for the following: 'Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you; and unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also?'"

"Wholly at variance with the human nature, impossible to the physical man—thy explanation, thy answer to this?" the good minister concluded.

"That it is God's word," the wife replied; "and that we, as his children, through a proper growth in his grace and goodness, may sometime hope to attain such divine attributes."

The rigid countenance of the good minister relaxed into an expression less tense. He considered a moment,

"Through a proper growth in his grace and goodness." In the words was a sense of relief, comfort, a pleasing familiarity, an invitation as if to peace, solace, an appeal difficult to resist. The words were lingering, repeating themselves in his mind, moving, stirring with a quiet effect in his soul. He picked up his Bible, in its touch a reassurance as if the touch of a long and trusted companion. He turned over its leaves, clean, worn with much use, the material bent of his mind, for the time, submerged in the thoughts they excited. The dear old Book! For years he had turned to its contents for a satisfactory answer to all troublesome, all doubtful questions. The dear old Book! A balm for every ill, an assurance for every doubt, a promise of the final realization of the highest ideals of his pure and once undoubting mind. The dear old Book! A hallowed shrine at which he had daily, hourly bowed in serenity, in purity of thought, asking, beseeching, praying, not peering, distrusting, questioning, doubting. The dear old Book! The teachings and precepts of which he had accepted with a faith too innocent to question. He hugged the Bible to his bosom. A tear moistened his eye, the swelling impulse of the soul moving itself in his manly form, every fiber in his physical being aglow, astir with the reverential feelings excited.

"Why should we question?" he said, holding the Book in closer intimacy, drawing it yet nearer to his heart, clinging to it as the infant in fear intuitively clings to the mother. "Why should we hesitate, stop at a want of the proper understanding; hesitate, stop at the limits of the comprehensive faculties of a material intelligence? Why should we desire, seek to strip the obscuring veil from that which is not clear to our knowledge, from that which is closed to our view? Why should we delve, dig, break up, weigh, measure, analyze, synthesize, trace out the individual, the several links of the unbroken texture, follow their continuity to a complete, to a perfect, to a cohesive whole? Is it not written that our faith must be as

the faith of the unquestioning, the unreasoning child; a confidence that cares not to trouble itself with the *whys*, the *wherefores*, an acceptance that receives alike the reasonable, the unreasonable; a belief that is whole without the evidence of the individual and several parts of which the whole consists? Why doubt, why question? Why not think of it, pass it by as of some divine significance, some divine purpose, leave it to the God of whom it had its origin?"

"Indeed, why not?" approved the anxious Mrs. Clark.

Had the good minister won in the struggle? Was he the victor? Leave it to the God of whom it had its origin. How pleasing, how agreeable the thought. His clasp tightened upon the Bible he still hugged to his bosom. The dear old Book, worn with the constant use of years. The dear old Book, his trusted guide by day, his pillow of safety, comfort, assurance by night; under its touch the insistence of the physical problems, so recently usurping the mastery of his life, had been rendered less urgent. The rigid, the restraining bonds of the material loosened their cruel hold, a temporary return of the immaterial or spiritual, in the easy, the alluring atmosphere of which his past life had been spent, in the captivating, the exhilarating idealism of which his highest, his purest, his most holy conceptions were unincumbered by material barriers. Could he go back to his former beliefs? Could he get away from the material that so cruelly, so completely hedged him in at every turn? Could he forget the physical world about him, the physical forces in the human life, their painful limitations, their urgent demands? Could he again live in the ideal, the spiritual?

The longing, the burning desire for such a consummation was fast gaining in his soul. He turned to his wife, to the girl who timidly stood at her side. He held them a moment in his earnest gaze. His face darkened, his manly features convulsed, set as if in excruciating pain. Forget the physical, forget the material, forget the gross, the

cruel, the inhuman injustice of the pale, emaciated, half-developed girl before him; forget the fundamental, the innate, the unbending laws of the material life; forget the faults, the shortcomings, the imperfections, the failures of developmental efforts; forget the overtaxed, the starved, the stunted lives of tender, struggling childhood; the lives which because of their hindering environs, their besetting influences, can never attain to a normal growth?

The struggle in the good minister's soul was fast nearing its end. The material forces, augmented by the pitying sympathies of a strong, a God-fearing conscience, were shouting, were clamoring for the decision. He must choose between the real, the ideal, between pleasing, agreeable fancies and stern, painful facts.

He opened his Bible. "A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation." (Ps. 68: 5.) He read it again, the third time over.

"Who is it?" he exclaimed, "so dull, so dead to understanding as not to doubt, as not to question? Who is it so credulous as to keep the faith unsullied? A father of the fatherless. If not of this child, of whom was it written? If not to her life, to whose life does it apply?"

The hordes of the material were driving him to new extremes, to limits at which hitherto he would have paused in pale fear, in utter condemnation.

"*A father of the fatherless.*" He threw the words from his lips with a scathing sarcastic emphasis, an impressive scorn in which was the suggestion of injured, of suffering contempt. "What fatherhood," he continued, laying his hand upon the head of the trembling girl, "would point to her blasted existence with paternal pride? What fatherhood in open rebellion would not turn at the very sight of her blighted life? What fatherhood—no, go, leave me that I may say it to God alone."

CHAPTER XX

EDGAR AGAIN SET FREE

AT last the release he had hoped for had come. The door of his prison cell opened, and Edgar Barton unhesitatingly stepped into the atmosphere of freedom. Around him the busy and noisy city; beyond him the wide and unknown world; within him a clear consciousness of the present moment, a sane understanding of the incidents and happenings of his recent life of confinement, a full knowledge of the jail that had failed to fix upon him the guilt of which he stood accused; but as yet, other than his dream of home and childhood—still daily, still hourly contemplated and ever hope-inspiring—his preceding life remained a dead and irresponsive void, an unbroken silence deepening, seemingly, with his every effort to reach and sound its unthinkable meaning.

In a way, to a certain extent, the ill-fated young man had learned to accept the imprisonment. It was something in his mystic life to which his thoughts could turn; a reality undoubted, unquestioned; something definite, tangible; a beginning it might be called, or, perhaps more meaningly and fittingly expressed, a memory in which and by which the yawning gap in the circle of his existence, to a corresponding degree, was lessened. Though only a dirty and ill-smelling prison cell, it was something behind him, something to which he might turn, a yesterday, a time, an incident upon which he might fix his thought, a period to which his mind might revert, something real, something of which, about which there could be no question, an undoubted occurrence in the certainty of which was attained a measure of self-confidence otherwise not possible to reach—a real, a live, a conscious past, though it be one of only a few months' duration and spent in a prison cell.

This the day to which the fated young man had looked forward with feelings no one can describe, with thoughts in the conveyance of which all words and phrases are inadequate to express. At last his jail had set him free. The locks had parted. The doors had opened. His prison had sent him forth. Freedom had come. In this newly liberated condition at first the young man took little notice of his surroundings, gave little heed to the animated streets, the busy, the hurrying throng; but not far had he gone until the bustle, the stir about him began to attract his attention, began to urge, to force itself upon his mind, began to instill, to infuse itself into his thoughts. The world without was not the world of the damp, the contaminated jail. The atmosphere in which he now moved was not the vitiated, the poisonous vapors that filled his noxious cell. Here was light, life, sunshine, activity, something to lead him away from the mystery of his past life; something perhaps to, in part, turn his mind from the unending speculation as to how, why, nature, fate had so placed him; an invitation to set his thoughts upon the future, to look not backward where naught is visible, but forward to a future perhaps none the less unknown to him than all mankind.

The mysterious past, the strange life behind him, could he erase it from his mind? Could he leave it alone? Could he begin here, now, this moment? Could he blot it from his thoughts, wipe it out, forget it all, start anew?

In the possibility of such a thing was an impulse that set his heart throbbing, that sent a glow of red to his prison-bleached cheeks, that made more firm the step that carried him upon his unknown way. Forget it all; start anew; to enter as other men into the affairs of life; to be actively engaged; to do something; to busy his hands in some task; to employ his mind in some work; to enter upon the day with some object in view; to go to his bed at night with a thought for to-morrow; to know himself a part of the world in which he found himself; to feel the comfort,

the consolation, the assurance, the encouragement, the sustaining effect that must come from the realization of a human kinship; to experience the embracing, the encircling, the strengthening bonds of fraternity, of brotherhood; to talk, to walk, to mix, to mingle with those about him; to know some one and, in turn, by some one to be known—could he do it? *To know some one and, in turn by some one to be known!*

As these words were slowly, more thoughtfully repeated by the fated young man, the wistful expression on his countenance deepened, grew into a longing markedly noticeable in every lineament of his features. Cruel destiny, inhuman fate, to place him in a world of which he knew nothing; to blot from his memory the life, at some time, at some place, that must have been his own.

He slackened the pace of his onward march. Deeper, more intense now the expression of his face, deeper, more clamorous now the longing in his soul. O for one look, one token by which to indicate the slightest connection with the people around him! O for one mark by which to establish the remotest bond of fellowship even with one of the many that passed him by! O for the feeblest recognition, the faintest acknowledgment! Alone, unknown, lost to the world, lost to himself!

He turned into a by street. While confined to his prison cell there had been times when his sense of loneliness seemed unendurable, when the lack of a conscious human fellowship bore in upon him with an unbearable weight, pressed upon his soul with a burden maddening in its torture, drove him into an agony insane in its intensity; but now deeper, keener, augmented with more distantly piercing, more acutely penetrating powers, it seemed to reach and to rend to distances hitherto untouched; seemed to infuse, instill in his soul a sense of forlornness more utterly distracting in its awful consciousness. Unknown to the world, unknown to himself, lost to those about him, lost to the throngs that pass him by, lost to the

streets that resound to the tread of his unknown way, that give back the echo of his aimless, his purposeless course.

Could he, as other men, enter into the affairs of life? Could he join in the activity and bustle about him? Could he find employment, occupation, work for his hands, work for his mind? Could he forget the unknown, the perplexing past? Could he leave it to its own lost and buried obscurity? The existence behind him, could he learn to forget it? Could he learn to keep it from his thoughts? Could he do it? Could he begin here, now, this moment? Could he look, look unceasingly to the future? Could he press, press ever forward, ever farther and farther away from the haunting past? Ever on, on to leave it finally in the forgotten distance? To make of it an obscurity befitting the eternal-like darkness in which it seems lost?

Quickened to equal the speed of his thoughts, the hurried footsteps of the fated young man soon reached the outskirts of the city. Upon his right the broad river winding in its easterly course; to his left and before him a forest, still, shady, green with the fresh young life of a new year's growth, aglow with the slanting rays of a descending sun.

"Here a retreat from the noise and commotion of the busy and irresponsive city," said the young man, gazing with eagerness into the quiet and inviting depths, "a place where, apart from all mankind, I might be able to decide upon some plan of future action, map out some definite course of procedure, arrange for the to-morrow that will come apace."

He entered the forest, wandered some distance into its promising quietude, at length threw himself upon the thick turf; but in the solitude of his surroundings, the stillness of the wooded section, the physical inaction was no relief. His mind, though less tumultuous, would hold fast to the problems, to the questions unsolved, unanswered. Alone, nameless, unknown, a stranger to the world, an utter stranger to himself. And then again the

questions as before: Could he turn his mind away from the mysterious past? Could he leave it to its own dead and buried obscurity? Could he set his heart upon the future? Could he engage in the affairs of life? Could he find employment, occupation, work for his hands, work for his mind? The life behind him, could he learn to forget it? Could he learn to keep it, force it, expel it from his thoughts? Could he hold his face ever, ever to the future? Could he forge onward, onward, ever farther, farther away? The dead, the mysterious past, could he leave it alone? Could he become reconciled to its utter effacement?

Utter effacement? The face of the young man reddened in the instant. The scenes of his prison cell-dream of home and childhood filled his mind. *Utter effacement?* "No, not so," he exclaimed. "Somewhere a past awaits me. Was it not shown to me in my first prison sleep? *Utter effacement?* No, not so. Somewhere the lost life may, must be found. Was it not revealed to me in a hallowed dream? Did it not appear to me in my unconscious slumbers? Mother, father, home, childhood? *Utter effacement?* No, not so. Somewhere the black curtain must rend. Somewhere the blinding vapors must melt away. *Utter effacement?* No, not so. Somewhere the dead obscurity must part in twain. Somewhere the silent void must resound to memory. *Utter effacement?* No, not so. Somewhere a ray must burst through the pall. Somewhere a beam must penetrate the darkness. Home, mother, father, childhood? *Utter effacement?* No, not so!"

In the following moments of silence a firm resolve was fixing itself in the mind of the young man. A definite purpose was deeply, was strongly anchoring itself in his turbulent, vehement soul.

"Go out into the world of action," he presently continued, in thought more guarded. "Enter as other men into the affairs of life; find work for the hands, work for the mind; think of, plan for, occupy myself with thoughts of

the to-morrow, with thoughts, with hopes for the future; forget the past, leave it to its own obscurity, to its own unbroken silence; yield, surrender to the mysterious condition in which some cruel fate has placed me; follow in passive obedience the strange, the unnatural course set by a destiny yet more strange, yet more unnatural? impossible, impossible!"

The young man sprang to his feet. He must find the way to the hidden past. He must find the way to the existence he had lost. He must find the way to the life he once knew. But whither, whither the search? But whither, whither the way to go? Whither, whither the road to lead him there? East, west, north, south?

He waited yet a moment in indecision, yet a moment in doubt as to the way, yet a moment ere the first step was to mark the beginning of the search, yet a moment while a decision more absolute, a purpose more definite might gain maturity in his mind. Seek out the hidden past; but whither, whither the search? Behind him the city, cold, crowded, a heterogeneous mass of contending humanity; before him the unknown; near him detective Eoff, from whose sight he had scarcely emerged since leaving the prison, but of the presence of whom he had no knowledge. East, west, north, south; somewhere the hidden life, somewhere the lost existence. Where? Where? The search—he must begin the search. Why stand thus in delay? Why hesitate thus in doubt? Why waste another moment in uncertainty? Why not start now, this very instant?

He forced himself forward, farther, farther upon the unknown way, deeper, deeper into the enshrouded forest, wandering here, wandering there, to right, to left, loitering some seconds in the hesitancy of doubt, hastening onward in the encouragement of greater assurance, now the one, now the other; to delay, to speed, to retard, to quicken; now west, northwest; now west, southwest, and now to west, to west; but all the while approaching nearer, nearer, closer, closer to the Asylum, that mighty lode-

stone that seemed to cling so tenaciously to his young and fateful life. East, west, north, south, somewhere the hidden life, somewhere the existence of which he had no knowledge. West, southwest, west, northwest, west, west, to the unknown, the mysterious past he must find a way. Somewhere, somewhere there must be a road leading back to the life he had lost.

He pushed still onward, came upon an abrupt turn, the opening forest in the near distance, close upon his back the shadowing detective, immediately in front of him a young woman clad in the uniform of a professional nurse.

"Will you pardon the intrusion? To me the way is unfamiliar, unknown," falteringly said the young man.

She raised her eyes to his face, a look of innocent surprise, then painful confusion. Did her senses befool her? Did she see aright? Could it be possible? "Edgar." She did not say it. The name died on her lips. "In form, in features, in many other characteristics, his exact counterpart and yet a difference so strangely, so strikingly different, yet a difference to chill, to kill the hope that had momentarily filled her soul, yet a difference to make it utterly impossible. Change so radical could not come in time so brief."

"I was searching for wild flowers," she hesitatingly said, "and, unmindful of the distance, wandered too far." She glanced at the tiny watch upon her wrist. "Past due now. I must hasten the return."

She was gone in the moment.

With features drawn, with muscles tense, the young man stood rooted in his tracks, stood for some seconds incapable of speech, incapable of action. In the fleeting woman a glimpse into the mysterious past. In her voice an echo from the long-lost life, a sound from the world that had slipped from his memory; in her look a beacon from the existence hitherto so completely, so utterly dead to his knowledge; a ray from the unapproachable, the impenetrable void.

"At last," he murmured, "a rift in the murky oblivion through which I grope, a break in the blinding clouds that darken, that blacken the unknown way; a beam cast into the boundless, the bottomless gloom of the lost life I must find, of the dead existence whereunto my course must lead."

Eagerly he bent his eyes along the path she had followed. Eagerly his gaze swept the thinning forest. Eagerly he searched each shadow for some sign of her presence. Eagerly he listened for one rustle of her garments, for one sound of the fleeting steps that had taken her from his sight; but she was gone, gone whither he could not tell, gone to what place he was without the slightest, the remotest idea, without the least, the faintest conception. Gone. She was gone, but not the inspiration of her momentary presence, not the influence instilled in the soul of the fated young man, not the voice in which she had spoken, not the look with which she had raised her eyes to his face. *Hope. Assurance.* Every fiber of the physical being of the young man was throbbing, pulsating under their stimulus, every blood drop of his body hurrying at the increased demand of his heart tuned to their harmony. Somewhere a past, and she with that past associated; somewhere the lost life, and she of that lost life a part; somewhere the hidden existence, and she with that hidden existence unmistakably connected—in her person a beam from the impenetrable void, a ray to lead him into its echoless obscurity; in her voice the call *it lives yet; still*; onward, onward to its waiting, its opening portals; onward, onward to its knowledge, its light, encouraging, sustaining promise.

The heart of the young man pounded at his chest, beat upon his ribs, threw its crimson into cheek, into brow. "Somewhere the hidden existence, and she with that hidden existence connected; somewhere the lost life, and she of that lost life a part; somewhere a past, and she with that past associated. Human ties, human companionships;

somewhere friends, associates, loved ones; mother it may be, father, people that I know, people to whom I am known; the things of childhood, the realities of childhood; restoration full; restoration complete; the black veil torn into shreds; the deathlike shroud rent asunder; the thick-banked clouds scattered to the winds. Somewhere the lost life, and *she of that lost life a part.*"

Again the eager eyes of the young man turned to the path she had followed. Again his eager gaze swept the thinning forest. Again in eagerness, tremulous, painful eagerness, each shadow he searched, researched for some sign of her presence; but she was gone, gone whither, whither he did not know; gone, where, where he could not guess; gone to what place in his mind he was without the faintest conception. Would she return? Would she come back to lead him from the unknown? Would she come back to show him the way to the life he had lost, to bring him face to face with the existence dead to all his knowledge? Would she come back to tell him the story of the forgotten, the obliterated, the dead past? Would she return? Would she return? Must he wait, wait her coming, or must he go, seek, search, find her? Wait he he could not. Go—he must go; but where, where, where, whither, whither, whither, east, west, north, south, *where, where, where?* Hesitancy, dismay, doubt, question, uncertainty, the way unknown, the place unknown. Wait—he could not wait. Go—he must go. Find her—he must find her. But where, where, where?

The face of the young man clouded. "The way unknown," he repeated. "The place unknown. She a part of the life I have lost. She a part of the existence so utterly dead to my knowledge. She a part of the black mystery in which my way is lost. She a fleeting, a momentarily vanishing messenger from that empty, from that rayless void. God, Jehovah, why lift not the obscuring pall? Why rend not the blinding veil? Somewhere the lost life. Where, where, where? God, Jehovah!"

In the extremity of unanswered inquiry, how natural the human appeal! God, Jehovah! In the finality of the soul's uttermost struggle, with what unerring certainty it turns to the Author of its existence. God, Jehovah!

About the fated young man the shadows of the physical night were now rapidly gathering, everywhere the darkness deeper, nearer approaching. Would he throw himself upon the ground to await the coming day, to await the to-morrow?

He stood a few moments in indecision, a few moments in which his prison cell dream passed in relief the mental reaches of his contending mind, a few moments in which the words of the fleeting woman were repeated in his ears, a few moments in which stern resolve once more took possession of his soul. For the task before him he must conserve his strength. He must be equal to the unknown ways. He must find food. He must find shelter for the night.

Reluctantly he turned away from the one, the only place in all the world with which there was connected a sense of real human association, for wherever, whatever the lost life, he felt that she of that lost life formed a part; wherever, whatever the existence stricken from his knowledge, he felt that she with that existence had some association; wherever, whatever the black void, he felt that she from that black void had come.

"God, Jehovah!" May we not ask in like voice with the fated young man, "Why rend not the blinding veil? Why lift not the obscuring pall?" The extremity of unanswered inquiry; the reaches of a physical destiny oddly, strangely cruel, but not to the extent of the relinquishment of purpose, the abandonment of hope. These were riveted in the bosom of the young man as if with the strongest thongs of steel, welded in his soul as if melted and incorporated with every basic and elemental substance of which it is composed. The life he had lost, the mysterious past, he would go, see, search, find it; east,

west, north, south; hither, thither; every highroad; every path or footway; every trail, winding, narrow, dim; every field, meadow, fruitful or barren; every valley, hill, slope, mountain; every glade, glen, dell; on and on, to and fro, up and down, back and forth, far and near. Somewhere the lost life; somewhere the hidden existence dead to all his knowledge; somewhere friends, associates, loved ones; somewhere the memories, the scenes, the things of childhood; somewhere a father, a mother, or if not now, somewhere the graves wherein a father, a mother in death must lie. Go, seek, search, find. Where, where, where? God, Jehovah! where, where, where?

"The dream of my prison cell sleep. The fleeting woman of the way unknown. Peace, peace," the young man presently said in calmer tones. "Peace, peace to this eagerness of mind, this seething, flaming vehemence of soul. This night will pass, this darkness cannot endure, these shadows must vanish in a new day, must melt in another dawn. My purpose is firmly, *resolutely fixed*. From it I shall not turn. To it I shall cling, cling with a steadfastness, bring to its aid every power of my physical being, every influence, every stimulus of my soul relentlessly set to the purpose. This night will pass. To-morrow will find me stirring, active, on the way. Each day, in resolve more strongly grown, in determination more deeply rooted, the search *I will, I must pursue* until the lost is found, the past restored, the mystery cleared."

The fated young man had made his way from the forest, was again traversing the outlying streets of the city. To preserve his strength he must have food, he must have shelter for the night.

Peace, peace to this eagerness of mind, this seething, flaming vehemence of soul. It is true, the night will pass, the darkness will not endure, the shadows will banish in a new day, will melt into another dawn. The to-morrow will come, but what will it bring into the life of the fated young man?

CHAPTER XXI

WHY HERE?

JANUARY of another year, February, the latter days of March, with their promise of warmth, of sun, of brighter skies, with the suggestions of the new life soon to show itself in blade, in bud, in flower, with the balm of spring to bid a sweet good-by to winter's receding strides, but all now lost upon the soul of the good minister as his hurried footsteps brought him from his small suburban cottage home into the outskirts of the city.

Already it had happened. The cruel mad current of the material in which his life had been so suddenly, so completely engulfed had swept him away from the honored, the enviable position of pastor of the city's foremost Church; had swept him away from the plaudits of the rich, the favored; had severed cherished, long-abiding friendships; had cast him out the slighted, the shunned, the avoided; had placed the blight of heresy upon his once fair and unquestioned name.

"The price I paid for my own soul's candor," the good minister murmured. "The sacrifice demanded of me that I might be true to myself; bartered for the privilege of keeping my own life unsullied with the loathsome stain of hypocrisy; surrendered that honor, integrity might yet rule in the courts of my own conscience; that I might seek, ask of God in a sincerity befitting his holy and divine nature." Heretofore comforting reflections. His loss one of worldly considerations, his gain an uncompromising self-respect. And now, this morning, an esteemed possession, a valued asset, a priceless holding, but the burden of the good minister's soul seemed heavier, more difficult to bear as his way conducted him among the familiar objects of his recent activities, led him back to the scenes still acutely alive in his mind; brought him near the mag-

nificent church within the sacred and hallowed precincts of which he had spent many peaceful and happy hours, hours of reverent prayer, hours of godly thought. Why had he suffered his footsteps to wander thither? Why had he come to a place so avowedly expressive of his worldly losses? Questions of painful, of bitter reproach.

"The sacrifice demanded that I might keep my conscience untarnished," said the good minister in tones more plaintive; "the exaction price of my own soul's honor; the cross to make or to mar my life; the calvary of my earthly way."

He stopped at a familiar corner, glancing down the broad expanse of the intersecting avenues, glancing at the palatial homes skirting in their imposing modesty, in their costly grandeur both sides of its clean and carefully kept course; glancing at the trees set by nature, set by the hand of man after a manner to harmonize in a pleasing severalty, in a unified and symmetrical whole.

"Palatial homes," he said, "in which, at one time, for me there was a cordial, a true welcome; at every threshold a hospitable hand to receive; at every threshold a friendly voice to greet; within, comfort, luxury, voluptuousness, indulgence without restraint; all that the heart could wish; all of the physical needs for the asking, for the taking without the asking; every comfort known to man—music, pictures, books, warmth, food—abundance in all the requirements of the material life; nothing wanting in the real, nothing wanting in the imaginary; the material blessings of a material—"

Seeing here the trend to which his thoughts tended, the good man left the sentence unfinished and sought in some other direction to occupy his mind, but the effort had come too late. Already the forces of control had made sure their purpose. Already, by comparison, the impression had been irremovably set. Already the picture in mental perspective was shifting to the opposite extreme. Hut and hovel, the alley homes of patched and thatched re-

fuse, denial, abnegation, toil. wretchedness, poverty, misery, contagion, disease, infancy born to such an heritage, childhood bound to such an existence and by fetters whose rivets are immovably set; the human life in its very incipency forced into an abnormal growth; in the very suck of the newborn babe the contamination to blight and soil its life.

"God!" reverently exclaimed the good minister. "Is there really an all-wise, all-powerful, all-seeing, all-knowing, beneficent, and benevolent God? or is it that such a Being lives only in the human hope, has but an imaginary existence, is no more than the longings and creations of the finite intelligence that must end with its material demise? "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Ps. 57, verse 5.) Plainly set forth, unmistakable in its meaning. Humanity, born to such a fate, foreordained to such a life, a prenatal doom not possible to shun, the sin and iniquity innate to the existence, inborn in the life, elemental in its nature, no less fundamental than any other part of its being. God? Then surely not an all-seeing, all-knowing, beneficent, and benevolent God. God? Then surely not a feeling, pitying, compassionate, personal, protecting God; not the God of my former conceptions; not the God to whom I once poured out my soul in candid, fervent prayer, asking in undoubting faith, believing in sincerity pure. Surely not a feeling, pitying, compassionate, personal, protecting God to whom such lives may turn with hope, to whom such lives may turn with promise; not an all-wise, all-seeing, all-directing, beneficent, and benevolent God, but a destiny of the physical that drives, that forces them whither it will; a destiny of the physical, all-determining, all-controlling through the unchangeable, the impregnable forces of its material nature."

Steeped in these and like reflections, the good minister crossed to the opposite corner of the street and, following along the familiar walk, a few moments thereafter stood

beneath the walls of the church within the sacred precincts of which he had spent many of the happiest hours of his life.

"God's temple only in name," he murmured, viewing the magnificent structure, brilliant now in the morning sunlight. "Scarcely more than an altar of formality, an empty ritualism, either unmindful of or ignoring the real problems of the human life. God? Is there, can there really be an all-wise, all-powerful, all-seeing, all-knowing, beneficent, and benevolent God? *God! Is there*, can there really be a feeling, pitying, compassionate, personal, protecting God, a God who hears the prayers men pray, a God who knows the thoughts men think, a God who is aware of, but who silently stands apart while the child's life is being forced into wreck and ruin? *No! There is no such God!* A like being has his existence only in the human imagination. A God of justice, a God of pity, a God of mercy, and for this world! No, says the tongue of injured and down-trodden innocence. No, says the tear of the helpless, the cruelly oppressed. No, says the wail of the sin-begotten, the sin-cursed child."

Alarmed at the extent of his thought, the good minister turned from the church, heavy of heart, wanting in purpose, an hour later found him wandering through an out section of the city.

"Whither this heedless, this objectless, this aimless journey? To what purpose my unguided, my heedless footsteps?" he asked himself, as his way brought him to the end of the street. "Wherefore this place, this particular place, and not some other? Why here? Not that God has sent me hitherward. Not that heaven in this had some purpose to fulfill, some mission in which I am the agent, some object as yet unrevealed to my knowledge. Not that Providence holds the rudder of my course, designates the ways I am to go, points out the roads my feet are to follow, bears me to right, to left, in the straight or in the winding paths. No, not God. No not Heaven. No,

not Providence. Things determined by other influences; happenings, occurrences merely casual in their nature; the incidents of a day, of an hour, of meaningless import; not the fulfillment of some definite, some foreordained purpose. But why here? Why this particular place, and not some other?"

In the insistence of the question the good minister noted more closely his surroundings. To the north and not far away he could see the river. To the west a forest, a wooded section through which the pathway leading to the Asylum. With the thought of the place a shudder passed through him, extending its depressive and sickening influence to every part of his physical and mental being.

"Indeed, why this particular place, and not some other?" The question, in greater insistence, in more urgent attention, again repeated. "Is it possible? Can it be that God, in some purpose, has sent me hitherward?" the good minister continued, after some moments of silence. "Is it possible? Can it be that heaven of me, in this, has a definite mission to fulfill? Is it possible? Can it be that Providence points out the way, designates the course, marks the itinerary of each passing hour, directs me in each moment? Why this particular path open to my feet, and not some other? Why this particular way, when a score, a hundred, a thousand other ways might as well have given me passage?"

Intent with these and many other thoughts of a kindred nature, the good minister passed on, made his way into the very heart of the forest. Can it be that God and Heaven and Providence are directing the steps of the good man, or is it merely an incident of casual occurrence, no more than the passive drift of his aimless, his purposeless tread, simply the course to beguile an empty, an objectless hour?

He came out into the open. Near him now the Asylum building, tall, frowning, massive in its awful significance, colossal in its terrible meaning, reeking in an atmosphere

indescribably its own, expressive of the inexpressible, suggestive of the inconceivable, indicative of the incomprehensible.

"God forbid!" exclaimed the good minister, gazing in pity upon its enormous proportions. God spare me such a fate! But, no; it is not God," the good man presently added, a different expression assuming the mastery of his face. "It is the destructive, the blighting effects of disease. It is the result of developmental, of structural deficiencies, the blasted fruit of the partially, the imperfectly matured, the failure of the physical to reach, to maintain the normal; a fate in which no just, no beneficent God could have a part; a destiny to which no loving, no pitying, no all-powerful God would, could submit. Call it what you will, assign to it any meaning you wish, but leave God out of it."

Chance in its more thoughtful, its more considerate study, a term of interesting, of questional meaning. Was it by chance that the first oak brought forth the acorn? Was it by chance that the first rose exhaled its sweet-scented breath? *Chance!* Are we to conclude that through the mere exigencies of chance the good minister was again brought to this place; or is it that in some other influence the guiding agency is to be found?

He mounted the broad stone steps, passed into the hallway, asked for Dr. Ruff, was shown to his office.

"The Rev. Clark," said the physician, rising with difficulty in his yet weakened condition, but extending his hand with an expression of welcome the good minister had not expected. "Something of importance must have brought you here after so long an absence."

"You remind me," replied the good minister, "that I have no mission either important or trivial. In the visit I plead an act of purposeless intent. I was merely walking this way, found myself upon the grounds, came in perhaps under the impulse of the moment. But your time is occupied. I shall bid you—"

"For one time, no haste," Dr. Ruff interrupted, motioning the good minister to a seat, "that is, no haste of which I am aware," the physician added, Mr. Hickerson at that moment hurriedly entering the office. "A message from Mr. Eoff, the detective," announced the assistant.

"Perhaps my presence," the good minister interposed, rising to his feet.

"No, be seated, we may need your assistance," said the physician.

From the Secret Service offices to the Asylum authorities.

Gentlemen: In continuance of the subject matter of my communication of some weeks past, and of my one visit to that place (another visit I am still earnest in the endeavor to avoid), it would now seem that the identity of Edgar Barton, the young man in question, must be worked out from that end of the line. Elsewhere I had hoped to uncover something that would aid us in the matter, but that something I have not found. Neither have I any prospects especially promising of results. On the contrary, in that one particular feature my efforts have had the effect rather to complicate than clarify the situation. The more I investigate, the more I am confronted with uncertainty. However, gentlemen, the purpose of this communication is not to give you an itemized account of my failures, with inferences and deductions attached. That would lead me into a long story, one, it is true, of rare and fascinating qualities to the detective mind, but perhaps of little interest to you. As matters now stand, it would seem that further investigation offers little in the way of valuable results until Edgar Barton can be located and the question of his identity settled in a satisfactory way. Other than the scars known to exist on the body of the young man, the Secret Service offices are still without identifying data. Hence the purpose of this communication—to ask that Dr. Ruff, in person, if his health has so far recovered, examine the inmate there suspected and forward the results at his earliest convenience. If no scarred inmate is there, we can be assured of the fact that the real Edgar Barton is not there. Of the converse, however, permit me to add that no such assurance necessarily follows.

Obligingly,

DETECTIVE EOFF.

With the reading of this communication Dr. Ruff controlled himself with difficulty. All of his former indignation was instantly aroused. "This matter," he

said, "shall be attended to without delay. This place of such damnable doings shall be freed. But for my recent illness it would have already been accomplished." Then, turning to Mr. Hickerson, "Is the suspected inmate of the resistant or submissive type?" the physician abruptly inquired.

"Gentle as a lamb," the assistant replied, "believes himself the crucified Christ, talks it continually, acts it from morning to night."

"But with all that, he may show us the resistance of a very devil incarnate," remarked the physician, rising to his feet.

Again that fated, that charmed expression, *chance*. Of the many words that fill, that crowd our vocabularies, is there another in meaning so loosely, so widely applied? Is there another in meaning so vaguely, so remotely expressive? What human life that has not hesitated, paused, turned at some of its so-called exigencies? What human life that has not questioned, sanctioned, or doubted its fitful whims? The chance of time, the chance of place, the chance of events, the chance of surroundings. With their varying order, what life has not turned? With their capricious currents, what existence has not been touched? With their favoring or besetting influences, what human hope has not encountered its life or death? In many instances strong, even irresistible in its power to restrain, to attract, to repel; frequently fulfilling our ideals, meeting with our most joyous, our most hearty approval, or exciting in us a disapprobation to bring forth our bitterest censure. Upon every path marked for the human tread, somewhere, at some time, in the distance near, or in the distance far, to lay its cumbrous burden upon the human bosom, dead, cold, heavy; or to awaken in the human heart encouragement, the promise of the fulfillment yet of some hope long abandoned, some desire long cast aside as incapable of realization. Chance! Are we to ascribe it to chance alone that the good minister's

way brought him back to the Asylum, or is it that an unseen, unrecognized influence is directing his seemingly casual course?

At the unopened door of the inmate the three paused a moment, the weakened physician to recover the spent effort of the journey, Mr. Hickerson to find the key to that special lock, the good minister to repeat in his mind the question, "Why here? why this particular place, and not some other?"

"Enter with heaven's blessings," said the inmate when presently the door opened. But the three men stood yet motionless at the threshold, stood viewing the inmate in the deepest interest. "Why hesitate thus in doubt? Why pause thus in uncertainty?" the inmate continued, approaching close to the visitors and in gentleness resting his hand upon the shoulder of the good minister. "It is not that which you seek, but the manner in which it is sought. It is not the message your lips would speak, but the spirit in which it is uttered. It is not the petition which you bring, but the sincerity in which it is brought. Forgettest thou the divine promise, 'And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive'?"

"Matthew 21: 22," murmured the good minister, falling upon his knees.

Was it God? Was it Heaven? Was it Providence? Or was it merely an incident of casual occurrence? Indeed, why here? Indeed, why this particular place and not some other? If the reason is apparent, if the answer is forthcoming, if there are those who know it solely of the accidental, then surely we might inoffensively inquire of them if in the purple of the violet, its floral characteristics, we likewise encounter that which is merely accidental in origin?

In the inmate at whose feet the good minister bowed, an expression of gentleness, of tenderness so completely fulfilling his ideas of the Christ in physical form, on his countenance the pitying, the sympathizing, the compas-

sionate look of the bodily Christ as many times in pleasing, in eager fancy, his mind had pictured; the presence of a beneficence new to him in the field of reality, of a quality scarcely conceived of him by the purest, the highest reaches of his imaginative powers. A personality divine in look, divine in manner, Christlike in its compassionate appeal.

"For thee all will yet be well," led on the inmate in tones of growing complacency. "To the thoughtful mind the seasons of doubt must ever come, such the limitations of the physical. It is not of the things which we see. They are of the material nature and must follow the paths of their appointed cycles, as list the winds to the quarters whereto their course is set."

The inmate reached for the good minister's hand and clasped it gently in his own.

"Your reason has conducted you into uncertainty, brought you into the ways of doubt, supplanted your once unwavering faith, fixed your eyes upon physical things, perishable in themselves. To know nature in the finite is to question the existence of a God of justice and mercy. With the finite's limitations it could not be otherwise. The circumscribed must ever show its shortcomings and imperfections. Man's reason itself is of the material and, perforce, of its own nature an uncertain guide. Therefore, arise, and—"

"Hold! No more of this delusive folly. Let us see about the scars," interrupted the physician. Mr. Hicker-son approached the inmate, began to unfasten his garments.

"If truly the crucified Christ," he said, "we shall find on his body the signs of his death upon the cross. . . . Sacred wounds and to be borne always with a sacred silence."

The impression had not faded. It was with him still, strong and imperious as when she first implanted it in his disordered and mad-ruled mind. The visible proof of his physical death upon a cruel cross, the tangible evidence

of his godly nature, the basis of his divine delusion. He the Christ and all the world to know him through and by these tokens. How carefully he had guarded their presence; how patiently, how enduringly he had borne the discomfort and pain of their long delayed healing; how unceasing the vigilance that the enjoined secrecy might not meet with the slightest distrust.

"Defile not in thy unregenerate touch," said the inmate.

Mr. Hickerson, pointing to the marks: "In location exactly as described, the burn on the chest, the scar on the foot," but to the physician's critical eye the appearance as of recent occurrence. "Undoubtedly of recent occurrence. These wounds are scarcely healed," he said; "their infliction, at the most, not more than two months ago. How long has he been here?" "Since October of last year," answered the assistant.

"And about that there can be no mistake?"

"No mistake," repeated Mr. Hickerson.

"Some more of that damn—" But thinking differently of the observation, the physician left it unfinished and started back to the office.

"May he yet be born of the Spirit," feelingly murmured the inmate.

Was it God? Was it Heaven? Was it Providence? Or was it merely an incident in casual occurrence, merely the meaningless happenings of one day in the life of the devout minister, merely the objectless working of a chance in which there is neither intent of God or man?

"Why here? Why this particular place, and not some other?" With a heavy heart, with a soul besieged with questions, struggling in uncertainty, harrowed by doubt, the good minister left the Asylum. Once more the path, leading through the deep forest, leading through the shifting patches of shade and light, lay open to his feet. Once more he plunged into its winding and solitary course. Once more the crowded, the busy, the striving, the con-

tending city. Once more the familiar streets, the homes of wealth, of affluence. Once more the church, magnificent, imposing, more brilliant now in its noontide splendor.

"To the thoughtful mind the seasons of doubt must ever come," the good minister murmured, pausing opposite the sacred portal. Was it God? Was it Heaven? Was it Providence? Or was it merely an incident of casual occurrence, merely the meaningless happenings of one day in the life of the devout man?

With an intense longing the eyes of the good minister rested upon the wicket leading to the vestry. It was open, an invitation he could not resist. He stole past it and, following along the familiar walk, a few moments thereafter halted at the vine-clustered entrance. The thought that he was an intruder upon sacred premises stayed him for the instant, but as quickly and with a decisiveness even more positive the influences which had directed his course thither again assumed the mastery. He ascended the steps, passed into the vestry. The picture of the Christ that had hung on the wall, the likeness beneath which he had sat in the deepest reverie, in the purest thought, the form upon which he had gazed for spiritual inspiration, the face into which he had looked, and not in vain, for divine hope, for divine promise, it was there, there as when he had daily sought its presence in sweet, in peaceful communion; there as when he had turned to it in the simplest, the fullest faith; there as when he had turned to it in open soul acceptance, beseeching, entreating, not questioning, not doubting; there as when he had said: "I am here to do thy will, a servant to carry thy holy message to the ends of the earth, a disciple to bear testimony to thy divine nature to all mankind." The Christ of his former conceptions; the Christ of his once undoubting, unquestioning faith; the same tender, compassionate expression; the same benevolent, beneficent countenance; the same pitying, sympathizing look; the Christ into the

hands of whom he had once unhesitatingly surrendered all.

The good man gazed yet more eagerly upon the picture before him. Christ in the physical form of man, Christ in the flesh, the bodily Christ that died a material death upon the cross of Calvary. Tears gushed from the eyes of the good minister. He threw himself upon his knees, his outstretched hands reaching to the picture above, his lips set in silent, unutterable prayer of soul to soul. A few moments thus, then to pass safely from the vestry.

Was it God? Was it Heaven? Was it Providence? Or was it merely an incident of casual occurrence, merely the meaningless happenings of one day in the life of the good minister?

Once more the crowded streets through which his way conducted him; once more the thinning sections, their decreasing stir, their diminishing commotion; once more the humble cottage home from which but that morning his purposeless footsteps had issued; once more the anxious, the troubled wife to receive him at the door.

"The girl Effie, she is dying," said Mrs. Clark, seizing him by the hand and hurrying him to the bedside. It was the last, the fatal hemorrhage of which, in the previous weeks, by hemorrhages less severe, the coming had been forewarned. The frothy blood coloring red the pale lips of the struggling, the expiring child, coloring a frightful red the white pillow on which her youthful head reclined.

"Auntie! the angels!" the good minister heard her murmur. Another strangling, choking, rattling gush of the frothy, the fatal red, another, another. "Auntie! the angels, they are coming," she gasped with outstretched hands. Another suffocating, strangling, choking, rattling gush, another, another, another. "Auntie! the angels, they are here," the good minister caught in the faintest whisper. The blood-stained lips parted in a pleasing, peaceful smile, the childish heart quivered, fluttered, hurried on a moment, quivered, fluttered once more in

feebler effort, then stopped forever. "*And this is death,*" said the good minister.

Was it God? Was it Heaven? Was it Providence? Or was it merely an incident of casual occurrence, merely the meaningless happenings of one day in the life of the devout man?

"Death of the physical," the good minister continued, approaching nearer to the lifeless form of the girl and taking her frail hand in his own, "death of the body, somatic death in which the human form must soon vanish; must quickly resolve itself into the dust of the earth; must become a part of the inanimate clay of the grave that opens to receive it; must go the way of all organic life—dissolution, disintegration, destruction. The childish hopes, the childish desires, the childish longings, the childish joys, the childish trials, the childish sorrows, the childish reverses—all ended in an eternal sleep; all stilled, never again to move or stir the soul; all stricken into a nothingness lasting, enduring. God! Is there really an all-wise, all-powerful, all-seeing, all-knowing, beneficent, and benevolent God? God! Is there really a feeling, pitying, compassionate, personal, protecting God, a God to whom each day, each hour, each minute of her life was known?"

The brow of the good man darkened. He raised the dead girl's hand toward heaven. "A compassionate, feeling, sympathizing God, who knew the tasks to which these childish hands were set? A compassionate, feeling, sympathizing God who knew the trials, the burdens, the deprivations that clung to her daily life? A compassionate, feeling, sympathizing God who knew of the heavy loads, the unbearable weights that bore her down? If such a God, then how is man to keep his faith? If such a God, after what manner of reason, through what type of understanding may he see and comprehend the justice done? If such a God, then wherefore—"

Audible sobs from the listening wife checked the good

minister, drew his mind away from the precipitous strain of thought into which he was falling, reminded him anew of the solemn presence of the death in which he stood, and into the face of which he now mutely gazed with thoughts of a different nature.

Was it God? Was it Heaven? Was it Providence? Or was it merely an incident of casual occurrence, merely the meaningless happenings of one day in the life of the devout man?

"The end of the physical," the good minister presently led on, tenderly folding the arms of the dead girl across her bosom. "Closed eyes from which the light of this world has disappeared forever. Frail hands never again to know a worldly task. The childish bosom still, quiet, irresponsive alike to the thrills of joy, the pangs of sorrow. The childish heart, its last throb, its last pulsation quieted in the unending, the eternal rest of its physical death. The end of the material. The last of the bodily existence. The unrelenting laws of the flesh that compel, that force, that drive, annulled through and by their own fulfillment. The cruel, the innate, the unbending principles of the finite existence resolved into the unfeeling, the immutable, the inexorable laws of the dust."

In the pause which followed the frame of the godly man was moved to a visible shudder. Like the traveler come to the end of the way, he could follow the thread of the physical no further—supreme in life, but as nothing in death—the all-determining agency in the flesh, but with the passing of the flesh its dominion brought to an eternal end.

* * *

At such a moment who is he or she unmoved by a shudder? In whose soul is there not a surge to set in tremor every fiber of his physical being? The brink of that vast domain of nothingness, or else the entrance to an endless life, the be all, the end all, or if not, the portal to an everlasting existence. "*God is, or God is not.*" These words

seemed to issue from the lifeless lips of the dead girl beside him, seemed to echo, reëcho in an awful last and final message. "Man to go the way of the leaves that fall and rot upon the ground, man to give up the hope of immortality." As these words were uttered by the good minister he reached for the hand of the silent wife. The physical had carried him to an extreme length, but it could carry him no farther. In his mind a new and different meaning of the text "that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit." The one he had confounded with the other. Material injustice, the bulwark of the finite mind, for a time had cast its shadow athwart his mental horizon, had shut him within the narrow confines of the laws of the flesh, had led him to banish God from the world of material things, had obscured the spiritual with the gross and inflexible problems of the physical; but now a morning of new and increased faith was dawning in the soul of the devout man. A greater, a God more glorious still was emerging from the doubts and misgivings in which he had groped. God everywhere and in everything, God unseen, unfelt, unrealized only in the mind of the benighted, the blinded. "In her life I saw not," said the good minister, but in her death all is made plain. Divided in a thousand ways—questioned in the voice of justice undone, now my faith is whole, my feet upon the granite foundations of a conviction bearing me beyond all doubt. God in her life, God in every life; God in her death, God in every death, the atonement of material injustice in a spiritual existence everlasting. An angel now and as eternal as God himself. The face of the good minister was literally abeam with the joyous restoration of a confidence unquestioned. In his soul a tide of spiritual radiance to melt and sweep into nothingness all problems of a nature finite, physical. "O God," he said kneeling once more beside the dead girl, "men may reason, men may question, men may doubt; but of thy presence in this moment, of thy presence in every moment

past, in every moment yet to come, I feel the greatest assurance. Halleluah! Glory to God!" The good minister had won, and now, his pure soul made purer and stronger, his pure life was to go on down to a peaceful and glorious end. The material had failed him. The material must ever come to failure; only the spiritual may endure forever.

CHAPTER XXII

THE SEARCH

Go, seek, search, find; hither, thither; every highroad; every path or footway; every trail, winding, narrow, dim; every field, meadow, fruitful or barren; every valley, hill, slope, mountain; every forest, glade, glen, dell; on and on, to and fro, up and down, far and near, east, west, north, south. Somewhere the lost life; somewhere the hidden past; somewhere the forgotten existence; somewhere friends, loved ones, home, father, mother; somewhere to escape this awful strangeness; somewhere to dispel the mystery into which his life had fallen; somewhere to meet, to know himself. Where? where? where? By rail, by stage, on foot, the crowded centers, the open country, the villages, the towns, the hamlets, for days, for weeks, for months. The summer gone; the autumn come; through heat and through dust and through rain and through mire; heedlessly facing the storm; hastening on in every passing moment; searching the way to right, to left, to fore, to aft; scanning every object for one token of the life he had lost. His garments worn, his last cent spent for a ticket to carry him yet a few more leagues in the search; to carry him yet a few more miles on the strange, the unfamiliar road; to carry him, as he yet hoped, nearer and nearer to that world he would know. The steady clank and rattle of the train, the cinderous smoke from the hot and throbbing engine, the dusty and blurred window through which his eyes swept the level fields of corn and cotton for one familiar object, the drowsy and languid passengers into the faces of whom Edgar Barton looked for one sign of recognition, but strangers, utter strangers all. The hidden, the mysterious past, the strange, the lost existence. Where? where?

Was he to fail in the search? Was there really no world,

no place of which he knew; no world, no place with which he was familiar; no world, no place in which to escape the unaccountable, the unthinkable strangeness in which he moved; no world, no place in which he might know himself and to others be known? The prison cell dream of home and childhood, was it only an empty mockery, a fleeting vision of restless sleep, the shadowy yearnings of deferred and feverish hope? The fair young woman in the face of whom he had hoped to catch a glimpse of the dead past, was that no more than a wayside apparition to deepen the mystery in which he groped, to lead him yet farther on the dark and unknown way?

Must the search fail him? Must the search end where it began—an irresponsive, an echoless past, a life completely, utterly dead to all his knowledge?

The fated young man settled deeper into his travel-scarred seat, glanced less frequently through the dingy window at the fields without, searched less eagerly the faces of those who came aboard at each advancing station.

Must the search prove useless? Must the search fail him completely? The hidden past, the lost existence. Where? where? where? By rail, by stage, on foot, the crowded centers, the open country, the villages, the towns the hamlets, the fields, the valleys, the woods, the mountains; for days, for weeks, for months; through dust, through mud, through rain, through storm; forging yet onward, doubting not the way, loitering not in uncertainty; meeting each failure with an unfaltering determination; surmounting each difficulty with strengthening courage; pressing yet forward in the firm conviction of a final success. Unmindful of the weary miles, heedless of the dreary hours, thinking not of the toil and sweat and physical pain of the way—on and on and on to the lost existence; on and on and on to the world that must know him and that he must know; on and on and on to a restoration full, complete, to a dissolution of the mystery

into which his life had fallen, to an explanation and expiation of all he had suffered and endured.

The heavier strokes of the throbbing engine, as climbing now the elevation gradually, almost imperceptibly, lifting from the southern lowlands to the foothills of the Arkansas Ozarks and beyond which, but a few more miles, the scenes once familiar to the eyes of the fated young man—many, most of the real, the tangible things of the existence so completely, so utterly dead to his knowledge; the material world he sought; the home, the father, the mother of the life he had lost; the associations, the memories that had been so effectively driven from his mind—only a few more weary miles.

Was he to fail in the search? Was there really no place, no world of which he knew? Was there really no escape from the unexplainable, the universal strangeness, regardless of the way in which he turned? Was there really, was there truly no place, no past with which he was familiar?

In these and many other thoughts of an inexpressible but kindred nature was lost and was fast losing much of the encouragement that had led him on, on; was lost and was fast losing much of the hope, in the sustaining strength of which endurance finds its sturdiest aid; was lost and was fast losing much of the assurance, the unfaltering confidence of final success.

Must he resign himself to a fate so unthinkable, so inhumanly cruel? Must he leave the mystic past to its own lost and buried obscurity; to the silent and irresponsible void into which it had fallen; to the unsounding depths of the chasm into which it had sunk; to the strange and inexplicable nothingness from which it seemed that he could not run away?

Resignation! Could he, must he yield to its unpromising, its unhopeful claims; to its slow-forming but ultimate stern and exacting demands? The future? Could he, must he face it without hope, without promise? The

lost life? Could he, must he turn from it in utter abandonment? The world, the place, the existence he sought? Could he, must he bid it good-by forever. East, west, north, south; hither, thither; to right, to left, to fore, to aft, all ways had failed him. All directions had led to one common end. Resignation? Could he, must he surrender to its cold, its cruel demands? Abandonment? Could he, must he throw himself, inert, helpless, into its beckoning and outstretched arms? Despair? Could he, must he—”

The fated young man straightened himself in his travel-worn seat, raised the dust-covered window at his side, and allowed his eyes to wander over the western slopes of the broken hills, over the more distant ridges winding and circling in their increasing height and on to the fully formed Ozarks as far as the eye could reach.

“They in themselves no less unmindful of their eternal grandeur and beauty than I am unmindful of the lost life I seek,” the lips of the young man whispered, his eyes following the blue-capped undulations, receding in the increasing distance until sky and mountain appeared to unite in one even and unbroken sea of purest azure. Nature in all of her mountainous splendor, sublime, majestic, enduring, reposing upon a bed of granite as old as time itself, as young as creation’s first moment; strength and beauty commingled; strength and beauty side by side; strength and beauty matched one against the other; scene unsurpassed; sky and mountain blended and blending in waves of purest blue. Often in the days lost to his memory had the fated young man gazed upon that sea of matchless color, tracing with eager delight its liquid shores of sky, of mountain, and once how familiar the shifting and changing lines of shadow and light, but, alas! now, in its unequaled grandeur and beauty, of a strangeness to chill and freeze his very soul.

Yielding more and more to the thoughts of failure, the fated young man lowered the window. Must the search prove useless? Must he surrender in hopeless abandon-

ment? Must he leave his past life to the oblivion that seemed everywhere to encompass it, that seemed everywhere to engulf it with an impassable void? Must he resign himself to a destiny so inexpressibly, so inhumanly cruel? Must he continue to meet failure at every milestone of the way? Must the coming moments, the coming hours, the coming days add only to the disappointment and discouragement already clamoring and contending for the mastery of his soul, already clamoring and contending for the vainness of the search that led him on, on? Resignation? Could he, must he surrender to its slow-forming but ultimate unyielding and implacable claims, to its slow-forming but final unbending and inexorable demands? The life he sought; the existence stricken, blotted from his memory with the passing moments, with the passing miles, with the advancing search—must it ever sink into an oblivion deeper, darker? must it ever hold to the cruel mystery within which it seemed inseparably twined? must it ever retain the awful nothingness into which it had fallen? The future—could he, must he face it without promise, without hope? The strange, unknown world around him—could he, must he—

The reflections of the fated young man were here interrupted by the touch of a hand on his shoulder. "The next your station," said the passing trainman.

The usual commotion and hurry, the usual shift of passengers, friends to greet arriving friends, friends to bid the parting friends good-by, the ringing bell, the puffing engine, the train was gone.

Every crowded center, the open country, the towns, the villages, the hamlets, every highroad, every path or footway, every trail, winding, narrow, dim; every field, meadow, fruitful or barren; every valley, hill, slope, mountain; every forest, glade, glen, dell; by rail, by stage, on foot, through heat, through dust, through mud, through rain, through cloud, through storm; for days, for weeks, for months, on, on, on.

At last the world he sought, at last the objects once familiar to his sight, the people he once knew, the friends he once loved so well, the father, the mother, the childhood home scarce half a league away, many of the things belonging to the life he had lost, but, alas! to the fated young man now of a surprising strangeness all. Resignation—could he, must he submit to its slow-forming but cruel and exacting demands? The search—could he, must he turn from it in hopeless abandonment, in final surrender? The lost life—could he, must he leave it to its own dead and buried obscurity? Alone, unknown to the world, unknown to himself, not the stranger in a strange land, but an utter stranger to himself and in a land that knew him not.

To the fated young man it was the cessation of hope, the beginning of despair; no to-morrow to which he might look with encouragement; no future in the promise of which to beckon and cheer him to further effort; nothing but resignation to the cruel destiny that had seized upon his life with unrelenting grasp; nothing but absolute and unconditional surrender to the inhuman fate that had coiled him about with unbreakable and irremovable bands, that had extended its unyielding and riveted fetters to the very depths of his soul. The dream had failed him. No more than an empty mockery to feed awhile the all-consuming desire of his life. The fair-faced woman only an apparition, an effervescent shadow, a specter of the hidden past to encourage for a time with its false allurements, to lead yet a few more miles in the fruitless search, to fill the to-morrow with new but falser hopes.

In utter bewilderment, the fated young man walked down the streets. The material necessities of life, hitherto occupying no more than a passing thought, were now demanding attention. Money gone, clothing faded, threadbare, the approaching night with no roof to shelter him, with no bed on which to lay his weary body. Where could he go? What could he do?

He walked on, came to the end of the street, turned into another, brought himself to an abrupt halt. *The First National Bank*. He stood gazing at the building, read the sign over again and again. "Why the feeling of familiarity?" he inwardly inquired of himself. Why the appearance as of some past association? Why the appeal as if at one time, some time, he had seen, he had known the place? His heart quickened. A few more moments he held the bank in the closest, the most searching scrutiny. "No," he said in soul revulsion. "Wherever, whatever the influence, tempt not more in thy false and unfounded promises; practice not again the deception born of thy insidious nature; incite not another hope to die a premature and treacherous death; haunt no further my dreary way with thy spectral creations; seek not to again disturb the deep dejection into which I am falling; leave my fated course to lead unmolested to its bitter end, to direct my heartless, my hopeless life whither it will."

The fated young man drew himself away, but, turn in whatever direction he would, the sense of familiarity, the feeling as if of some past association, seemed to follow his every step, appeared to grow more vivid and distinct with his increasing effort to dispel it from his mind.

"O God!" he exclaimed, "is it in this that the resignation of my soul is to be put to its final test? Is it in this that I am to feel more keenly the inevitable end that awaits me? Is it in this that the barbed and searing daggers of disappointment and dejection are to be driven yet to new and deeper depths? Is it in this that the uttermost limits of my strength, my unaccountable fate have not yet been attained? Is it in this—"

The fated young man had made his way from the town, was already far on the road, the dearest, the best-known road of the life he had lost, the road of which he was once familiar with every turn, curve, slope; with every bank, swell, depression; with every tree, bush, shrub, blade, vine, flower; with every stretch of sunlight, dim, bright,

large or small; with every breadth, shape, span of shadow, sleeping in momentary peace or shifting in eternal change; the road of the life he had lost and the road, a turn in which, now brought him in view of the home he once knew and loved so well. Hallowed spot of childhood; sacred garden of youth; temporal paradise of memory; the planting, the budding, the flowering of associations, of confidence, of trust; the planting, the budding, the flowering of reverence, of love, of affection. Home! Who is he or she that has not felt its touch, its thrill? Who is he or she in the bosom of whom its tumultuous and responsive waves have not overtopped the very floodgates of joy? Home!

The fated young man stopped in unutterable, unthinkable consternation; stopped in a myriad of feelings, of sensations new, strange, yet in all of them a tinge of familiarity, a touch of association to momentarily stun his perceptive powers.

"Is it, can it be true?" he presently said in stifled, in smothered voice. "Have I at last—am I yet—can it really be—is this—has chance, fate, destiny kindly led me?"

The fated young man surveyed more carefully the grove of mingled oak and hickory; the lawn, smooth, wide, recently mown; the sturdy fence of wood and vine; the narrow gate, its posts high, massive; the low-framed building, clean, white, of modest proportions; a broad, blue ribbon of smoke issuing from the brick-coped chimney and arching away to the near-by hills in one unbroken span; sheep, cattle feeding in a meadow; patches of corn, green, brown, of luxuriant growth. The home of his childhood, the home of his youth, the home of his early manhood, the home of the life he had lost, the home of the existence so completely, so utterly dead to his knowledge, the home he once knew and loved so well, but now a home upon which the fated young man stood gazing in wonder and awe, stood gazing in a soul-convulsing sense of mingled

strangeness and familiarity. Seemingly somewhere, at some time, where? when? Must the search prove useless? Must the search fail him? Must the unknown ways lead always to unknown ends? Must he resign himself to a fate so unthinkable, so inhumanly cruel? Must he leave the mystic past to its own lost and buried obscurity, to the silent and irresponsive void into which it had fallen, to the unsounding depths of the cavern into which it had sunk? Seemingly somewhere, at some time, where? when? Resignation—could he, must he yield to its slow-forming but ultimate stern and exacting demand? Hope—had he really, had he truly no living hope in his soul? Seemingly somewhere, at some time, where? when?

“Abandonment—not yet, not yet,” murmured the fated young man, after some moments of breathless indecision, after some moments in which his eyes again rested upon the scene before him. “Not with the passing of this day, not with the sinking of the present sun, not with the coming twilight which is only a few leagues away, not yet, not here, not now. Wait, wait another hour. Wait, wait another day. Wait, wait the coming to-morrow. If spell it is, the spell will pass. If magic charm, its dissolution must quickly follow. If the conjurations of my dying hopes in their last and final struggle, the shades will vanish, the objects, the forms melt into oblivion. The scene, with its inexplicable mixture of strangeness and familiarity, with its promise of associations lost and forgotten, will resolve itself into a stern reality, and what I see now will then be forever closed to my sight. Resignation—no, not yet, not here, not now. Wait, wait the passing hour. Wait, wait another day. Wait, wait the coming to-morrow. Somewhere, at some time—”

The fated young man drew yet nearer. Sensations new, strange, unaccountable, were leading him, were coaxing him on, on. He entered the grove of mingled oak and hickory, made his way to the gate, started to lift the latch. Must the search prove useless? Must the search fail

him? Must the search end with its beginning? Must he resign himself to a fate so unthinkable, so inhumanly cruel? Must he leave the unaccountable past to its own lost and buried obscurity; to the silent and irresponsible void into which it had fallen; to the unending, the unsounding depths of the cavern into which it had sunk? "Resignation—no, not yet, not here, not now. Wait, wait another hour. Wait, wait another day. Wait, wait the coming to-morrow. Not yet, not here, not now. If spell it is, the spell will pass. If magic charm, its dissolution must quickly follow. If the conjurations of my hopes not yet dead, in their last and final struggles, the shades will vanish, these objects, these forms melt into oblivion; this scene with its inexplicable mixture of strangeness and familiarity, with its promise of lost and forgotten associations, will resolve itself into a stern reality; and what I now see, with its passing, will never be seen again." Somewhere, at some time, where? when?

The fated young man lifted the latch. Sensations new, sensations strange, sensations unaccountable were leading, were coaxing, were urging, were forcing him on, on.

"Is it, can it be true?" his soul, in eagerness, again inquired, and again the eyes of the young man rested upon the grove of mingled oak and hickory. The lawn, smooth, wide, recently mown; the sturdy fence of wood and vine; the narrow gate, its posts high, massive; the low-framed building, clean, white, of modest proportions, with a broad, blue ribbon of smoke issuing from the brick-coped chimney and arching away to the near-by hills in one unbroken span; the sheep, the cattle feeding in the meadow; the fields of corn, green, brown, of luxuriant growth; in all of it a touch of familiarity, strange, new, unaccountable; in all of it the feeling as if of some association, but where? when? how?

"Is it, can it be true?" the soul of the fated young man, in eagerness more urgent still, once more inquired. "Is this in reality the life I have lost? Is this in reality the

home of my prison cell dream? Is this in truth the world I seek?"

He opened the gate. "God of heaven," he murmured, "can it be, is it possible, have I at last; or is this no more than an aberration of the senses, no more than the passing shadows of my expiring hope, no more than the vain yearnings of my soul driven to the verge of despair? If so, if no more, then inexpressibly cruel the fate, unspeakably cruel the destiny not to spare—"

The outspoken thoughts of the fated young man were momentarily interrupted by the appearance of a light within the house. He stood a few seconds in the deepening twilight, his eyes fixed upon the building. Strange hour of passing day, of coming night; strange moments of vanishing light, of engulfing darkness; in their mixed and mingled colors, in their changed and changing shades weird appears the familiar, uncouth seems the natural.

"This the world hidden to my knowledge? this the home of my lost life? No, no," said the fated young man in tones of hopeless dejection. "Not so, not so. Only the glamour of my deluded senses; only the reflections of my struggling, my dying hopes; only the shades of that lost realm into which my course is precipitously falling. No, not so, not so. In these objects, in these things, in these surroundings a strangeness more strange my eyes never beheld. In these objects, in these things, in these surroundings a strangeness more strange my mind never conceived."

Weird the hour of receding day; weird the hour of advancing night; weird the moments of passing light; weird the moments of enshrouding darkness; lawn and oak and hickory and fence and vine, all changed and re-changed and changed again by the passing tide; and now, in its deepening and darkening waves, the fated young man waits a few moments in unspeakable silence. O night of the Ozarks, since first thy shades were formed, upon what human life hast thou settled with blacker

shadows? Since first thy cycle was born, into what human soul hast thou poured more of utter, of absolute dejection? This the world he sought; this the life he had lost; this the place once familiar to him; these the objects, the things, the surroundings he once knew; the objects, the things, the surroundings he once loved, yet now of an appearance as if he had never seen them before, yet now of a strangeness inconceivable even to his wildest fancy. Ah! master hand of magic! Lawn and oak and hickory and fence and vine changed and rechanged and changed again with thy gentlest motion.

"This a part of the lost life?" said the fated young man. "These strange, these inexplicable surroundings once familiar to my sight? These strange, these inexplicable—"

He left the thought unuttered. From the near-by building came a low, earnest voice that broke upon his ears with a wonderful sense of familiarity; a low, earnest voice that sent a quickening thrill to his lagging and despairing heart. He listened awhile in breathless suspense. Seemingly tones once loved, seemingly tones once familiar to his ears, seemingly a voice he once knew, but, "no, no," his soul whispered in somber, in stern denial. "Fate may force me, drive me, compel me to follow in many, in most of her bitter ways; may force me, drive me, compel me to some manner of participation in many, in most of her cruel aims; but not again will I yield to her delusive snares; not again will I give credence to her false creations; not again will I hearken to her unfounded promises; not again will I suffer the death of one more hope born of her fitful moods. Already an unwonted credulity has led me too far; already the betrayal of my trust"—

The familiar voice came clearer, its earnest and rising tones reaching now in easy understanding the fated young man; reaching now even beyond him in the otherwise undisturbed stillness of the increasing darkness of the gathering night. "O God," came the voice, clear, distinct, "to-night we pray that thy care and protection be

with our boy—in his troubles, in his afflictions, we beseech thee.”

The listening young man could endure it no longer. With a heart leaping, throbbing, pounding, surging; with limbs trembling, weak, unsteady, he made his way to a window, to the window of his paternal home, to the window of the life he had lost, to the window his baby hands had first patted in innocent simple glee, to the window around which the earliest impressions of his life had been made, to the window through which on tiptoe he had first viewed the world without; to the window in connection with which were associated a thousand things and incidents and happenings of his childhood, the window of his youth, the window of his early manhood, and the window through which the fated son now stood gazing in unspeakable wonder at the gray-haired father, at the prostrate and heart-bleeding mother, as at the fireside altar they bowed in humble, earnest prayer. Sacred worldly scene, earth's nearest approach to heaven—home! The home of his lost life, the hearthstone of his earliest recollections, memory's fullest and sweetest cup, association's strongest and most enduring bonds, love's tenderest and truest claims. Indeed, sacred earthly scene! But now strange, passing strange to the fated young man.

“Not so, not so,” he inwardly repeated. “Fate may drive me, force me, compel me in many, in most of her bitter ways; may force me, drive me, compel me to some share in many, in most of her cruel and inhuman designs; but not again will I yield to her delusive snares; not again will I hearken to her unfounded promises; not again will I give credence to her false creations; not again will I suffer the death of one more hope born of her fitful moods. Not the home, not the fireside, not the altar, not the father, not the mother of the lost life I seek. A strangeness more strange my eyes never beheld; a strangeness more strange my senses never knew; a strangeness more strange my mind never could conceive. No, not the home,

not the fireside, not the altar, not the father, not the mother of the life I have lost."

With the ending of the prayer, the fated young man turned from the window, turned in hopeless dejection, in utter abandonment, turned to face the unknown world, turned to make his way whither he knew not. Full night was upon him. Lawn, oak, hickory, fence, vine, still, silent in its somber and enfolding shades; still, silent in its treadless passage to the moments of dawn with which again to wrap them in smooth and liquid sheets of light; still, silent in that "deep and perfect hush" of nature; a stillness, a silence in the conceptions of the finite mind likened only to the unending calm that marks its material dissolution; likened only to the eternal hush of the sovereignty of somatic death itself.

All roads, all ways had led him only to failure. All roads, all ways had ended in no more than fruitless endeavor. All roads, all ways had converged into this one dark terminus, now strangely still, now grotesquely silent.

The fated young man had turned from the window; had turned to face the unknown night, the unknown world; had turned to wend his way whither he knew not. But a different impulse seized upon him; a new resolve stayed his receding steps. Hunger, fatigue, physical claims, insistent, urgent, clamorous now in their unheeded demands; insistent, urgent, clamorous now in their requirements long deferred; insistent, urgent, clamorous now at a limitation beyond which they could not go. Food, he must have food; shelter, he must have shelter.

He turned again and knocked loudly at the door. All roads, all ways had led to that threshold; all roads, all ways had conducted to that entrance; all roads, all ways had converged into that one common terminus; all roads, all ways had guided his eager footsteps hither. Must the search prove useless? Must the search fail him? Must the search end with its beginning? Must he resign him-

to a self fate so unthinkably, so inhumanly cruel? Must he leave the mystic past to its own lost and buried obscurity, to the silent, the irresponsive void into which it had fallen, to the unsounding depths of the cavern into which it had sunk? Loudly he knocked. The door opened.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE DRESS OF SOLID BLACK

By nature scantily endowed with the characteristics in which impetuosity finds the elements favorable to its development and by practice a constant and zealous adherent to a self-discipline antagonistic to such tendencies, yet despite these natural and acquired aids, in the face of the new developments, Mr. Eoff found it not altogether an easy task to hold himself within what he knew to be safe and considerate bounds.

Dr. Ruff's communication bearing the intelligence of the presence at the Asylum of a scarred inmate, but scars of undoubted recent occurrence, in itself would have been sufficient to have aroused the detective to greater effort. This a feature, when considered alone, to deepen and complicate the Asylum plot and to invest it with a daring in the character of which even the boldest might well experience a sense of pride. But of greater concern to the cautious and analytical mind of the detective was the meeting of the strange young man with the fair nurse. With this incident many possibilities hitherto unthought of were suggested and possibilities of a nature to give to the whole affair a different aspect.

But of more immediate interest to Mr. Eoff, in the committal of this act the fair nurse had unmistakably connected herself with the Asylum plot. Circumstantial evidence, to be sure, but of the kind to admit of little doubt. Really a fact established, or if literally and legally not quite fulfilling all the requirements of a question so definitely decided, a matter in deductive value amounting to practically the same.

With this new development Mr. Eoff was more than pleased. It gave the promise of immediate action. Things might now be pushed to a conclusion. He would go again

to the Asylum, interview the fair nurse in person, secure from her a satisfactory explanation, have her story in full; or, if meeting with a refusal, detain her by process of law.

Thus decided, with a dispatch characteristic of the man, the Secret Service offices were apprised of his purpose, after which, securing a public conveyance with the minimum amount of delay, barely half an hour had passed when Mr. Eoff for the second time found himself within the Asylum walls and this time not with the view of further disseminating the baits, but for the more fascinating purpose of shortening and tightening the nets.

The whole place was astir, orderlies busy in their preparations for the night, nurses, attendants, each one occupied with some duty, special or otherwise. The murmured undertones of inmates less noisy in their perverted discontent mixed and mingled with the clamorous cries and obstreperous demands and commands of those more outspoken in their madness. Altogether an unprepossessing atmosphere, truly a place to disarm the most obdurate, but of much less concern to the hardened detective when once closeted with the Asylum physician and the purpose of his mission well under way.

"It then is your intention to interview the nurse in person?" said Dr. Ruff, anticipating Mr. Eoff in his rather extensive prelude.

"In person, yes," rejoined the detective. "Her meeting with the strange young man was not by accident. Things don't happen in that way. It was all prearranged, the time and place known to both. Yes, I have come to interview the fair nurse in person, to hear her story in full. If she can satisfactorily account for her conduct, reasonably explain her acts, all right, so much the better for her. If not, or if she should refuse, I have warrant of Federal authority to hold her for future developments. As matters now stand, I can see no reason for further delay."

"Shall I call her?" asked the physician.

"For a more convenient time and place we need not wait," answered the detective.

Dr. Ruff pushed the ever-convenient button.

If only the stern physician and the sterner detective could have seen that dim shadow as it stealthily stole from the office window! Not by accident was she prepared for that special moment, not by chance did she overhear that conversation; but by a watchfulness in the constancy of which no wakeful second caught her unaware.

Edgar again free. It was Edgar she had met in the forest. Could it really be true? Could it really, *really* be possible? or must there yet be some mistake about it? Edgar that strange young man? What power to bring such wonderful, such unthinkable change! What transformation to render him a stranger to herself! She had thought to have seen the likeness, to have recognized it in his person, in his face, in his eyes, a similarity strikingly noticeable, but with all that, a difference, a manner of strangeness unrecognizably strange; but he it must have been, he it was, and he again free.

With phenomenal quickness she regained her own room. There was no time to lose, not one minute, not even the millionth part of the shortest second. She must make her escape. It must be hurried, it must be sure. Edgar again free. She must go to his aid. Edgar alone, lost in the forest. She must go to his assistance, she must seek him out, she must find him. The detective—she must evade him. Flight, hurried, sure, escape, how?

The extra guards were already abroad, every part of the building securely fastened for the night, every door locked and relocked, every exit doubly bolted and barred. Escape, hurried, sure! Her bell was ringing—wh-i-r, wh-i-r, w-h-i-r-r-r, loud, long. She knew the summons. She knew the hand that pressed the button. She knew that it was the doctor's call. W-h-i-r, w-h-i-r, w-h-i-r!

"AY! ring, ring," she mentally cried. "Ay! louder, louder; but this one time the call comes in vain; this one

time the summons falls upon deaf, upon irresponsible ears." *W-h-i-r-r-r-W-H-I-R-R-R-R-W-H-I-R-R-R-R. Ay! Ring ring, ring, AY! LOUDER, LOUDER, LOUDER.* Edgar alone, Edgar lost in the forest. She must go to his aid. She must seek him out, find him. *Flight*, hurried, sure, *escape*, how?

She hastily changed her dress, the nurse's uniform for one of solid black. The keys at her bosom would afford her access to one high room at the back of the building, a way of danger, a way of hazard, but she knew the turns, the corners. She was thoroughly familiar with every pitfall that beset its course; thoroughly familiar with every snare calculated to lead her astray. A way of peril, but in the extremity of the moment, in the urgency of the instant, the only way open to her, the only course by which it was possible even to attempt escape.

"Edgar, that strange young man she had met in the forest—what fate to so change him! what powers to so quickly alter him beyond her recognition! Edgar again free, seeking her perhaps in his unknown way."

Her bell grows silent. It rings no more. The doctor's hand has released the button. He calls not now. Silent, silent, but in the silence she experiences only a feeling of assurance, a sense of composure, a purpose unmingled with any thought of failure, a determination of the kind to carry her beyond all barriers. Silent, silent. Not again will she answer its call. Not again will she obey its summons. Not again will she—

Footsteps, voices on the landing (the doctor's, the detective's), headed straight for her room. "Must have her story in full or else detain her by warrant of Federal authority for future developments."

She seized the coil of rope and the small bundle of necessities. If only the stern physician and the sterner detective could have seen with what masterful control she awaited the moment; if only the stern physician and the sterner detective could have seen the half-concealed smile of fearless disdain that dimpled her beautiful cheek; if only

the stern physician and the sterner detective could have heard that soul-whispered promise of continued, of unending fidelity to that fated young life—lost, groping upon the strange, the unknown ways!

They were nearing her room, closer, closer. She could hear them plainly, distinctly.

“Hardly credible. No woman’s hands so strong, so bold as to scar the inmate. That a deed to demand a courage, a daring no inducement would lead her even to attempt. That the work of an associate or accomplice, not only schooled to an unusual degree, but with the promise of a kingly stipend to reënforce and strengthen the courage.”

She recognized the voice of the detective. They turned to the left, the very move which she had expected and for which she waited. Another shadow and dimmer now as she passed into the hall. Her way a way of hazard, but she knew the turns, the corners. She was thoroughly familiar with every danger that beset its course, with every pitfall that lurked at her fleeting feet. Her way a way of peril, but in the utter extremity of the moment, in the great urgency of the instant, no other way was open to her.

Halls, passages, flights of stairs, she knew them all. Moans, cries, gibberish grumblings; madness, mixed, mingled, compounded; screams, shrieks, she had heard them often, she knew well their meaning. To right, to left, to left again, forward, forward. Here the section more closely watched, more heavily guarded, to the fleeing woman a stretch of the way more dangerous still. She passed it in a bound. She passed it in the space of a suppressed breath. Again more halls, more turns, more corners. Again more stairs, narrow, steep, long, winding, again to right, to right, but she knew them all, she passed them without a pause. Here the topmost floor, thence forward to Room No. 879.

Escape, hurried, sure; the way a way of hazard, the way

a way of peril, but in the urgency of the moment to the fleeing woman the only way open to her. "Edgar that strange young man. Edgar again free. Edgar alone, lost, seeking her upon the unknown ways."

If only the stern physician and the sterner detective could have seen that dark shadow as it flitted round the corners; if only the stern physician and the sterner detective could have heard that light tread as it passed down the halls; if only the stern physician and the sterner detective could have known the room she entered; *and if only the fair nurse had worn still her uniform of white!*

"*In raiment black,*" said the inmate, intently bending his eyes upon her, "panoplied as death ever wends his desolate and destructive way. Unto me first in the spotless robes the angels wear. Now thy vestments the habiliments of darkness itself. Unto me then the heaven-sent messenger of joy and life; unto me now the hell-groomed bearer of sorrow and death. Unto me once in the embodiment of powers limitless in their scope, infinite in their nature; now to confront me in the incarnation, of a mortal weakness alike common to all finite beings. Unto me—once—the—the—beacon—"

Speech failed him, utterance passed from his lips. An expression, weird, strange beyond description, instantly dissipated every token of the beneficence that had marked his features, instantly drove from his countenance every trace of the benevolence that, for the time, had made him more than mortal. His godly bearing seemed to pass as a dying ray into an enshrouding, into a destructive gloom; seemed to lose itself in a sombrous shadow, powerless, incapable to reflect, to give back the faintest, the feeblest scintillation or corruscation of its once all-determining, its once all-powerful existence; seemed to vanish, to leave him with the swiftness, the momentary haste, as vanishes, as ceases the thought of the ocean-wrecked victim at the very instant the deepening, the superimposed waves claim his last conscious hope. Born in her presence

and in her presence to pass away, the delusion was fading, the godly nature losing its hold, losing its power, losing its influence. He was passing from the divine to the human, and that human steeped to the very depths of a pernicious madness; from the Christ, tender, gentle, compassionate, to the maniac, wild, violent, destructive; from an ideality magnified, embellished, glorified with every attribute of the undefiled, the immaculate, *the purest of the pure*, to a morbid reality confused, incomprehensive, polluted, defiled, contaminated with its own perversion; from the limitless stretches, the unending infinitudes of the immortal, with its comprehensive vastness reaching into distances incalculable, inconceivable to the mind of finite conceptions, reaching into, penetrating the rarer, the more distant zones of an immensity known only to the godly imagination—to all vanish in a breath and in its stead the four bare walls of his prison cell.

If only the stern physician and the sterner detective could have known in what presence she stood, could have known into whose face she patiently, fearlessly looked, could have known with what unflinching courage she awaited the decisive moment, could have heard the deeper whispers in her soul: "Edgar, that strange young man. Edgar again free. Edgar alone, lost, seeking me upon the unknown ways."

"You! you!" the inmate exclaimed, his tones hissing, seething with the pent-up violence of his long quiescent madness. "You of the tender, the weak hands of the woman; you of the faltering, the failing purpose common to her sex; you of the heart unstepped of the things wherein and by which the valor of the soul is determined, of the things wherein and by which men determine the quality, the composition, the make-up, the purity of courage; you of the feet unfamiliar with the paths dedicated to those of fearless tread, unfamiliar with the ways set apart for those who press ever onward despite the dangers that beset the course; you of the determination that melts,

that vanishes in the first red flames that burst from contention's heated forge; you of the eyes that well up, that flood their depths in hot, in blinding tears when incensed strife his armor of conflict dons, when insulted dignity unsheaths its sword in vindication of the wanton insolence."

The tones of the maniac grew more wildly contemptuous, more scathingly bitter, more intensely scornful.

"You! you!" he continued. "You come to interpose yourself between me and my purpose, to attempt to block my way, to endeavor to hinder me in the work I am to do, to throw an impediment at my feet, to try to leash my hands, to say that it is only a crazy notion, a childish whim, a foolish fancy; to scoff, to jeer, to gibe the endeavor; to tell me that I cannot do it. Why, mad woman that you are, know you not that your purpose is fruitless, your efforts futile? Know you not that heaven and hell combined have not the restraining power? I can do it; I will do it; I must do it; and when it is done! ha! ha! When it is done!"

The madman drew menacingly nearer to the motionless woman, stood now towering above her in all his maniacal strength. Her way the way of danger, the way of hazard, the way of peril, but in the urgency of the instant, in the extremity of the moment, the only way open to her. She must pass him by. She must gain the one high window. "Edgar that strange young man. Edgar again free. Edgar alone, lost, seeking her upon the unknown ways." Alone, lost, seeking her in the dark forest—

Footsteps in the hall.

"Listen, listen, they come, they come," she whispered.

"They? Who comes?" quickly, madly demanded the inmate.

Her hands were at the coil of rope, one end made free, knotted, the running noose safely, securely formed.

"The men, the officers," she answered. "They come for you to say that you cannot do it, to jeer, to scoff the

idea, to cast themselves between you and your purpose, to block your way, to tie your hands, to fetter your feet, if need be to imprison, to place you in heavy irons. Listen, listen, dozens, scores of them, armed with every means of restraint, prepared to overpower, to drag, to pull you down, to force you into submission, to lock you in a cell, to chain you in a dungeon, to bind your body, limbs, to prevent you from doing it, to tell you it is a crazy notion, a foolish fancy; dozens, scores of them, strong, determined. Sh—still, listen, don't you, can't you hear them, their heavy tread, their clanking chains, their rattling fetters, their snapping locks? Sh—sh—still—still—sh—sh—still—still."

"Edgar, that strange young man. Edgar lost in the forest. Edgar seeking her along the unknown roads."

That one high window, she must gain it. The maniac, she must pass him. Was there some change in his threatening, deadly attitude, the slightest, the faintest relaxation? Was there a perceptible weakening of the grip that seemed to hold him as if his very muscles were made of rigid bars of iron? Was there a lessening of the tension that soon must break in all the fury, frenzy, force of his unguided, unrestrained, mad-driven mind? Was there yet hope, even the tiniest, the least conceivable fragment of hope, that the gathering storm might be tempered, that the rising wrath might be averted?

Many times her influence had been such as to appease and to quiet. Many times she had been successful in her efforts to bring temporary peace to their perverted, their tormented, their belligerent souls. Many times, through silence, patiently waiting, or by word spoken in fitting tone, or by look restraining, quieting in its influence, or by deed enacted at the determining, the decisive moment, she had been able to stay the threatened upheaval, to guide them safely beyond the mental cataclysm, to smother the psychic spark with the next moment to break into cinderous, into withering flame, to ground the gathering maniacal

current in an instant to charge, to overcharge with its pernicious, its destructive influence, every impulse possible to the human mind, and to leave in its charred, its gray-colored circuits only the ashes of its death-dealing course. Many times she had been successful in her purpose to temper, to appease, to quiet, in her endeavors to bring temporary relief to their tortured souls; but this time her efforts were to go for naught; this time her attempts to end in signal failure; this time her influence of no avail.

If only the stern physician and the sterner detective could have seen the maniacal face of the towering inmate! If only the stern physician and the sterner detective could have known with what dauntless courage she awaited the issue! If only the stern physician and the sterner detective could have heard the dominant whispers in her soul: "Edgar that strange young man, Edgar again free, Edgar alone, lost in the dark forest, alone, lost, seeking her upon the unknown ways; alone, lost, seeking her in the strange places."

Many times her powers had been such as to appease, to quiet; but this time they were to go for naught.

"To throw themselves between me and my purpose?" wildly cried the inmate. "To din my ears with their denials false as perdition itself; to face me in the hell-prompted assertion that I cannot do it; to besiege me with their unrelenting, their sarcastic reproach; to attempt to belie my powers in their unending, their damnable taunts; to constantly shadow me with their odious, their detestable persons; to say to me that I cannot do it?"

The manner of the inmate grew more intensely threatening, in his tones the ring of a madness the like of which she had never heard. That one high window, she must reach it. The seething maniac, she must pass him by. Edgar that strange young man.

If only the stern physician and the sterner detective could have seen with what steadfastness of purpose she awaited the decisive instant!

"*To say to me that I cannot do it,*" repeated the maniac; "and you the purveyor of such intelligence; you the vanguard to such a mission; you the agent sent to apprise me of their purpose; you the forerunner to announce their approach? Then expect not of me the mercies common to your sex; look not to me for the deference custom has long rendered to you because of your woman's weakness; plead not to me the frail, the resistless powers innate to your feminine nature; believe not to stay the hand of violence, to avoid the merited retribution, to shun the just requital, to escape atonement's penance, because of the womanhood in which you come. *Thwart me? No! Your life's blood? Yes!*"

One moment, the fleetest, the shortest. One instant to pass with the speed of the quickest thought. The maniac could restrain himself no longer. With a savage cry, with a beastlike bound he hurled himself at the motionless woman. Her way a way of danger, a way of hazard, a way of peril, but in the urgency of her purpose the only way by which to go. Edgar that strange young man. Edgar alone, lost, seeking her in the gloom of this night, seeking her along the unknown ways. That one high window, she must reach it. The maniac, she must pass him by.

If only the stern physician and the sterner detective could have heard that savage cry! If only the stern physician and the sterner detective could have seen that beastlike bound!

How it was done, if there are those who care to know, who care to guess, we leave it to their consideration; but done it was and done with phenomenal quickness. The coil of rope falling about the maniac's chest to securely pinion his powerful arms in its tightening noose. Only now the grated window. With a single wrench of the iron bar taken from the bundle of necessities, though done with woman hands, the grating parted. She sprang to the sill, forced herself through the opening and down the

dangling rope, down, the full distance of the four stories, to safely reach the sod beneath. Indeed, a way of danger. Indeed, a way of hazard. Indeed, a way of peril. But to the fleeing woman a way of safety, a way of sure escape. Edgar that strange young man. Edgar alone, lost, seeking her in the forest, seeking her in the darkness of the night, seeking her upon the unknown ways.

If only the stern physician and the sterner detective could have seen that fleeting figure as through the blinding darkness it made its way from the Asylum grounds. Escape—hurried—sure—she passed the inclosing wall.

CHAPTER XXIV

RESTORATION

THE day broke, another day in that fated life. The fresh light of dawn creeping into the room, driving out the darkness, gently, tenderly stealing into the face of Edgar Barton, to arouse him again to consciousness; gently, tenderly interrupting the sleep that for a few hours had rendered him unmindful of the strange world around, unmindful of the strange events of the night before. He opened his eyes, opened his eyes upon the room once familiar to his sight, upon the furniture, the pictures, the hangings, disposed, arranged exactly as he had left them less than two years ago, upon the small desk by the window at which, in the late afternoon and early evening hours, it had been his custom to review the business transactions of the day, balance the accounts, check and recheck such matters as had not come under his personal supervision. His eyes wandered from object to object, from picture to picture, from the chair at the desk to a young man's portrait on the wall, from the door leading into the small hall without to the eastern window and through which past the lawn and on to the mountain slope tinged with the first rays of the rising sun, then back again to objects large and small. Everywhere he turned familiarity seemed to confront him, in many of the objects an appeal different from anything he had ever experienced, some of them presenting the appearance as if he had seen them but yesterday or at most within the near past, in others a familiarity or association belonging to a time more distantly removed and more vaguely uncertain; but in none of them the old strangeness so constantly present or, if absent for a few moments, always to return with increased effect.

He dressed himself, brushed as best he could the dust

and soil from his faded and travel-worn garments and took his stand at the eastern window.

In the view now before him an appearance of familiarity even more striking. Beneath, the morning light, the lawn, the grove, the fence, seemed to appeal to him almost with a human touch; seemed to speak to him almost in human tones; seemed to motion, to beckon to him with open, outstretched arms; seemed really a palpable, a tangible part of himself.

Wonderful influence of lost and forgotten associations, the vines, the trees, the gate, the morning light, the wooded slopes in their nature's way communing with the fated young man, whispering, calling, shouting to him in toneless, in voiceless recognition, whispering, calling, shouting to him of memories the sweetest, the most enduring; whispering, calling, shouting to him of the life he had lost; the soul of nature, in earnest, in sublime appeal, whispering, calling, shouting to the soul of the fated young man; familiarity in every trunk, in every branch, in every bough, in every feature, aspect, of lawn, of fence, of slope, of vine, associations in a hundred ways, in a thousand ways connecting him with the objects in his view, whispering, calling, shouting to him of the life he had lost; whispering, calling, shouting to him of the existence that had been blotted from his memory.

Wonderful influence, but while the fated young man viewed and reviewed the objects before him the forces of a firm incredulity were mustering strongly in his soul, gathering, concentrating their numbers in the purpose of a stubborn, an obdurate disavowal.

"Strange whim of a destiny more strange," he presently murmured, the dark frown of despair overcasting, almost in the instant, his wan and haggard features. "Not content to dispose of my life in such a way as to render me a stranger to myself and to send me forth into a world that knows me not; not content to leave me in the criminal's cell, as well I might be there to tire out my thought and to

wear out my mind in useless and futile speculation as for what, to me, the world without contains; not content to start me on a strange and endless road in search of that which I may not, cannot find; not content to grant me even as much as the privilege of a bitter abandonment, a resignation accepted regardless of conditions; not content to let all hope die a pitiless and ruthless death—but when persuaded that it must be so to seek in some false allurements to revive it again into active and throbbing life, to send it yet farther upon the strange, the unknown ways; to hasten it on in renewed, in increased—”

He did not, could not, finish the sentence. Denial, deep, stern, bitter, was rapidly gathering in his mind; denial, deep, stern, bitter, was rapidly possessing his soul. He waited some seconds, his lips set in a bloodless compression, his eyes holding fixedly to the objects before him, his hands clenched firmly, his arms in part extended as if to guard against some hideous and mortal foe.

“No, not again,” he said, when presently his thoughts found vocal expression. “Destiny, fate, whatever the agency, whatever the influence, whatever the power, known or unknown, of material form or immaterial in its nature, of this world or some other world, of this sphere or of some other of which humankind has heard naught, of God, Heaven, Providence, what or what not I do not know, why or wherefore I have not the slightest understanding. Neither can I guess to what lengths it may yet extend, to what inconceivable extremes it may finally drive, to what unthinkable limits it may at last lead. But not to the restoration of my deluded trust; not to the reestablishment of my lost confidence; not to the revival of my abandoned, my dead hopes; not to one more mile on the unknown way; not to one more step in the fruitless search; not to one more moment in the lost endeavor. This a deceptive appearance to pass within the space of a few hurried thoughts. This a false familiarity, as false as the prison cell dream, as false as the fair nymph of the forest,

as false as the shadows of yesterday's grotesque night; all a falsity to vanish in derisive phantoms at the first hopes revived; all a falsity to flee in fickle haste at the first confidence inspired; all a falsity to momentarily emerge into the unalterable strangeness of the life I hold; to instantly enshroud and incorporate itself with the mystery insoluble; to leave me in the gloom, the darkness of a world of which I know nothing. No, not again, not again, for while my trust is my own in that one thing, fate, destiny, Providence is powerless, and when it is not my own I have no trust for betrayal. Do with me what you may. Drive me whither you will. Force me to the uttermost extreme within your power. Make of me anything you wish or desire, but leave me my trust unimpaired, and into delusion I will not again fall. In this one thing—"

Overtopping the eastern hill the morning sun rays suddenly flooded the window at which the young man stood; suddenly flooded the lawn, the immediate grove of mingled oak and hickory, the more distant wooded slopes.

His eyes rested upon the scene, brilliant now with the morning mysteries and glories of his childhood days, upon the sudden burst of nature's splendors once so thrilling, so appealing to his youthful, his tender soul, familiarity more striking, more impressive still, heightened in lawn, in fence, in vine, in bough, heightened in every ray of the newborn day; in every flitting change of tree, of light; in every slope; in every outline of hill, of mountain; associations motioning to him, beckoning to him in childhood's free, in childhood's easy tokens; associations calling to him, shouting to him in childhood's lisping, in childhood's gleeful tongue.

"Shadowy fancies," at length he murmured with drawn, with compressed lips. "Magic wild in her deceptive creations, wild in her plastic skill; enchantment mad in her transforming power, mad in her metamorphic touch. False, heartless nature to play thus in derisive mockery

with my abandoned, my dead hopes; to trifle thus in coquettish freedom with my soul already banished to the bleak, to the frozen realms of utter abandonment. But the play is in vain. The mockery is to pass effectless in its own false and fleeting guise. My trust is still my own. Betrayal need not tempt me further in her artful promises."

The fated young man turned from the scene with nervous suddenness. Denial, stern, bitter, was clinging to his life. Denial, stern, bitter, was moving deeply, strongly in his soul. But deeper, stronger the influences in the midst of which he stood. Home, objects, things belonging to the life he had lost. Home, objects, things belonging to the existence that had been stricken from his mind. Associations, memories, indistinct, imperceptible to time, imperceptible to place, imperceptible one to another, but vaguely spanning the impassable gulf, reaching feebly, dimly into the hidden void, catching here, there a tiny fragment of the forgotten past, illuminating the black oblivion in broken linear, streaks in instantaneous, in repeating beams as the rayed, the shivered lightnings in their fickle, in their sportive glee illuminate heaven's darkest clouds. The mental powers really, actually beginning to penetrate, pierce, force, drive their way into the dead unknown. Memory at last persuaded to loosen the seals so thoroughly, so rigidly, so cruelly set; at last persuaded to break, to part, to crumble the cement of the lost, the forgotten tomb.

In the soul of the fated young life a light new and yet not new was slowly, effectively kindling. A light new and yet not new was slowly, surely disseminating, dispelling the gloom. A light new and yet not new was dimly, feebly casting its rays into the lost, the hidden existence.

"Spell of spells, charm of charms," said the fated young man in low, in tremulous tones, "sensations, awakenings new to me, sensations, awakenings never before experienced, sensations, awakenings strangely familiar. If once a con-

scious life I had, if once objects known to me, if once things with which I was familiar, if once a childhood home, if once—" He checked himself. Again the darkened frown of denial came into his face, his jaws set firmly, determinately, and for some moments he held himself in a tense, in a rigid silence. For a struggle still more trying the forces of disavowal were mustering themselves in his soul. By a battle more stubborn, through a conflict more bitter, the mastery yet to be determined.

"Thrice led on," he presently continued in low but positive voice. "Thrice the betrayal of my confidence in promises, in appearances no less false perhaps than these. Thrice the restoration of my hope upon evidence of a nature as equally befitting its trust. Thrice the duped, thrice the deceived, thrice the promise, but not—" He broke off in the thought unfinished.

In his soul the disavowal, though stubborn, though bitter, though battling with the strength, the determination of a confidence thrice deceived, though battling with the strength, the determination of a trust thrice betrayed, was perceptible, was surely losing in the struggle. Some unseen, subtle, irresistible influence seemed to be gathering round him, seemed to be permeating, diffusing itself into and through his very physical and mental being.

Rapidly and with inexplicable sensations his eyes once more swept the room, once more rested upon the objects in a searching, scrutinizing gaze, once more wandered through the window to the scene without. Familiarity more touching, more striking, more appealing to his senses met him at every turn. Familiarity more touching, more striking, more appealing to his senses confronted him in every object, drew him to them through the influences of an association impossible to resist, through the influences of an association well-nigh human in its appeal, well-nigh human in its touch.

Denial? Why do we think? why do we speak? why do we talk of denial? One moment it may be ours for dis-

posals. The next moment we may be its helpless, its obedient slave. One moment we may hold it in the safest, the truest trust. The next moment it may pass forever beyond our control. Though thrice deceived, yet there was no power in the soul of the fated young man to stay the reviving hope. Though thrice forced to the limits of an absolute disavowal, yet in the new truth that was springing up in his mind no effort upon his part could longer hold it even in the feeblest restraint. Truly the day of reclamation for his lost life, the day of resurrection of his dead past. Memory, restored to full power and activity, soon to break the seals of its sepulcher, soon to dissolve the mystery in which his life seemed hopelessly, seemed irrevocably cast; objects, things, surroundings, though tongueless, though voiceless, speaking of the life he had lost; objects, things, surroundings, though dumb, though senseless, calling him back to the forgotten existence; objects, things, surroundings, though inhuman in their nature's soul. communing with the soul of the fated young man.

"*God! heaven!*" In the finite extremity why the one, the universal appeal? Men may, men do talk lightly, jeeringly that it is so. Some weakness, some frailty, they say, but has the extremity ever been their own? Perhaps it has not. Perhaps, when it is their own, they who talk that way, who think that way, will talk, will think in a different way. "*God! heaven!*" The pale lips of the fated young man could barely give utterance to the words, could barely give voice to the exclamations, could barely give breath to the sounds.

His strange, his inexplicable life was passing, fading, melting away; passing as passes the deepest darkness of the physical night in the van of the coming dawn. The old strangeness releasing its cruel bonds, breaking its rigid, its merciless shackles; memory unloosing the death shroud, beating back, back into the life he had lost, beating back, back into the forgotten past, beating back,

back into the unknown existence, beating back, back into the world he once knew, beating back, back into the impenetrable void that had so completely, so thoroughly engulfed his life, beating back, back into that vast, that limitless realm of nothingness from which hitherto no ray, no sign, no token had come.

The scenes of his childhood, the things of his childhood, the realities of his childhood, beginning to unfold to his recollection, beginning to live again in his memory; the scenes of his young manhood, the things of his young manhood, the realities of his young manhood beginning to unfold to his knowledge, beginning to take their place in his mind; the inexplicable, the unaccountable mystery beginning to dissolve itself in the increasing light; the world he had lost, the world he sought beginning to cast its shadows—dim shadows, indistinct shadows, though true shadows—within the reaches of his mental horizon.

Denial? No denial now could maintain a place in his thoughts. Disavowal? No disavowal now could find a responsive note in his soul. Restoration soon to be made full, complete. The dead, the forgotten past soon to live again in his memory. *Wonderful awakening!* If in the finite there is that which may be thought of as remotely bordering upon the infinite; if to mortal man there were granted the privilege, the capability of feeling, of experiencing even the faintest, the least of that which approaches or partakes of the immortal; if in the powers and possibilities of the material or physical there is that which may be compared with the immaterial or spiritual, perhaps the restoration of the fated young life may best be likened to that resurrection hoped for and promised after material death, for in the one beset by finite bearers is scarcely less of the truly wonderful than in the other limited only by the powers of an infinite God. Denial? It is not always within the province of man to say. Disavowal? It is not always within the capabilities of the mind to choose. Though thrice deceived, no power could retard the re-

viving hope. Though thrice betrayed, no influence could impede the returning confidence. Things, objects calling him back to the life he had lost. Things, objects leading him back into the forgotten existence. Feelings, sensations, the more delicate influences incapable of definition; influences that stir, move, expand, thrill the mind; influences yet more delicate, yet more subtle, that stir, move, expand, thrill the soul; influences in the character of which, in the quality of which, in the production of which we do not know; influences in the analysis of which science as yet, psychology as yet has not furnished us a satisfactory explanation, a comprehensive, tangible connection of cause and effect; but influences, notwithstanding which gross and fundamental shortcomings none the less convincing in their powers, none the less determining in their effect. Truly a wonderful, truly a marvelous unfolding of his dead past.

The mental forces of the fated young man, in drawing perspective reaching back into the dream-hazed period of childhood's earliest recollections, back into the budding, the rose-tinted hours of the first impressions definitely fixed in the memory and on down through the succeeding years, through the many, through the shifting scenes, gathering in number, gathering in force, gathering in volume, gathering in distinctiveness, gathering in variety, gathering in vividness, broadening ever in the onward sweep, quickening with each advancing stage, the span of each hour, the span of each moment adding its wealth of restored memories to the ever-deepening, the ever-rising, the ever-expanding tide of reclamation. Life in reproduction as he had lived it, the joys, the sorrows, the trials, the temptations, the struggles, the battles, the denials, the victories, the reverses, the defeats belonging to the tender and more impressive years, achievements and failures of minimal proportions if measured by the standards of manhood, but withal perhaps in their seeming insignificance, in their trifling consequence, in their want of

visible and material results even greater than manhood's greatest. The sorrows, the trials, the temptations, the struggles, the battles, the denials, the victories, the reverses, the defeats common to each succeeding stage in the human life. An orderly unfolding of the forgotten past. Things, events springing into his memory. Things, events taking their place in his mind. Things, events, realities linking themselves one to another in orderly array. Things, events, realities emerging from that vast realm of nothingness into which his past life had unaccountably fallen. Things, events, realities drawing him near, nearer to that stage of restoration in which his lost identity is to be restored; drawing him nearer, nearer to that period of reclaimed recollection in which his own name is no longer to be an unexplained mystery; drawing him nearer, to that moment in which he may know himself.

Wonderful restoration! Truly a resurrection of the material mind. His dead past through a thousand, through a thousand thousand awakening avenues again springing into life. Reviving memory, like the God-driven light of material day, driving, everywhere driving its illuminating rays into the black, into the once irresponsive void; driving, everywhere driving its disseminating beams into the lost, into the forgotten years.

"This," murmured the fated young man, "the brink of some strange destiny, the approach to some strange climax hitherto untouched, an extreme soon to reach a limit beyond which even fate itself may not go, the terminus of the unknown, the unaccountable ways decreed to the life I hold, the predetermined end, the final, the last."

Hush! The hush of the after moment of the death flash of a storm; the hush comparable only to the dominion of the last frozen sleep; the tumult in the thoughts of the fated young man stilled as if his mind had been instantly consumed in one sweep of a devastating flame, as if his soul had been withered, had been parched in the first blast of an all-devouring hell, as if his physical life had

been stricken into an eternal nothingness, as if the material world about him had suddenly slipped into an infinite, an illimitable void.

Hush! Hush! No question, no thought of the mysterious past, no question, no thought of the present moment, no question, no thought of the future. Hush! Hush! Deeper! Deeper! God may know, heaven may know, the angels may know, but we may not, cannot know. All ways, all roads had brought him hither; all ways, all roads had led to that common end; all ways, all roads had converged into the one terminus. Now no unaccountable past, now no mysterious present, now no hopeful or hopeless future, no time, no hour, no day, no place, no thing. *Hush! Hush! Hush! Deeper! Deeper! Deeper!* A few moments thus. A few moments consumed, destroyed, annihilated. A few moments stricken from their rank in the orderly passage of time. A few moments lost, utterly, eternally lost. Then restoration full, then restoration complete.

Then pale, trembling, the fated young man, in full knowledge of the past, in full consciousness of himself, turned to the door. Mr. Eoff was standing at the entrance.

"Once more a prisoner," said the detective, slipping a pair of heavy handcuffs about his wrists, "and this time wanted by both the State and the Federal authorities."

The rush of footsteps, the presence of others. "*My wife, my father, my mother!*" exclaimed the fated young man. Mr. Eoff raised his eyes to see the fair Asylum nurse, a gray-haired, angelic woman, a stooped and aged man entering the room. God may know, heaven may know, the angels may know, but we may not, cannot know.

Restoration full, complete, of the life he had lost, and restoration full, complete of the power and trust that had once been his own, for in one of the drawers of the small desk in his room, undisturbed, unopened as when he had

placed them there for the night—that awful night, the climax of all his trouble, were found U.S. bonds in amounts to cover most of the shortage. These had been placed in his hands after the bank had closed for the day, and he had carried them home for safe-keeping. This discovery was sufficient to restore the full confidence of all concerned, even Mr. Eoff sharing in it with a promptitude wholly foreign to his nature. But Edgar Barton could have no real peace of mind until the last cent had been as satisfactorily accounted for. To clear his name with the bank officials, to prove his innocence to the Federal authorities, to reestablish an honor no tongue could belie, no friend overrate, no enemy question, was not to square himself with his own conscience. The world might call him innocent, but of this innocence he and his God must feel, must know.





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